

OUR BOOKSHELF.

An Introductory Course of Continuous-current Engineering. By Dr. Alfred Hay. Pp. xii+360. Second edition, revised. (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1916.) Price 6s. 6d. net.

LIKE all Dr. Hay's books, the present work will well repay the elementary student for the time spent on its study. It first treats of the elementary laws of electromagnetics, then proceeds to deal with instruments, machines, secondary cells, electric lamps, switchgear, and conductors. In places it lacks depth, whilst such things as definitions, fundamental ideas, and the distinction between E.M.F. and P.D. are not quite so clear as they might be.

The chapter on armature windings could be improved. The statements made regarding wave-windings have the ordinary two-circuit four-pole winding in view, and one at least of them is not even universally true for this. It is a mistake to hide from the student that many other wave-windings are possible, especially as some of them have practical advantages which will lead to their more extended use in future.

The chapter on storage cells ought to have at least one illustration showing a complete cell or battery, and the diagrams showing the construction of the plates might have been of a more modern type. The really useful primary cells should surely have found a place in "Continuous-current Engineering."

The chapter on switchgear is to be especially commended, as it gives much more information than is usually found in a small general text-book.

Although we have criticised several details, we are pleased with the book on the whole, and can recommend it to those requiring an elementary book on the subject. DAVID ROBERTSON.

My Yoruba Alphabet. By R. E. Dennett. Pp. xi+45. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1916.) Price 1s. 6d. net.

THOSE who have been accustomed to depend upon the classical work of Col. Ellis on the Yoruba people may be surprised at Mr. Dennett's speculations. Ellis, a careful, competent writer, tells us that they worship a pantheon of nature deities, like Olorun, the sky-god, and phallic gods of fertility, like Eleggba, to whom human sacrifices in a brutal form were, or are, offered. Of their higher spirituality he gives little or no evidence. Mr. Dennett, a competent philologist, starting from his own "firm conviction that all the works of the Great Creator of the Universe . . . conform to one definite universal order, and that the spirit, or inner consciousness of man, moves in conformity to this universal order so long as that consciousness works in obedience to the dictates of its Great Author," finds beliefs of a similar type among the Yorubas, who "are by nature deeply religious." Their alphabet, as interpreted by him, expresses eight "Elemental Factors," such as Authority, Morality, Potentiality, and so on. He claims that the summary of his results "should

establish decisively and conclusively the systematic conformity of the construction of Yoruba words—especially the Yoruba primitive verbs—with the eight elemental factors of the Great Universal Order." Whether the hypothesis meet with acceptance or not, Mr. Dennett's book will be useful to students of the Yoruba speech, and, in particular, the system of transliteration now proposed deserves careful consideration.

Bacon's War Maps. Europe, embracing all the Countries Involved. (London: G. W. Bacon and Co., Ltd., n.d.) Price 6d. net.

THIS folding war-map includes the greater part of Europe and is on a scale of 1:4,000,000. It is politically coloured, fairly clear, and has a large number of names, but the only attempts to show relief is by a few stray caterpillar heights. In elevated areas like the Alps and the Carpathians these serve some purpose on a small-scale map like this, but in a lower region, such as the Allies' western front, the few heights that are shown are more misleading than useful. In the Balkans the map fails to reveal the significance of the Vardar valley. Nor is there any attempt to show marsh lands, the military importance of which has been demonstrated on more than one front. In the matter of names there is some scope for criticism. Halicz is not marked and Gorizia appears in the unusual form of Gorz. The map leaves scope for many improvements, which might have been carried out at the expense of the somewhat glaring political colouring if cost was a first consideration.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Science in Education.

PERMIT me to suggest that the science of man is scarcely "a vicious circle of introspective examinations," but is itself "one of the realities of external Nature," to use Prof. Soddy's definitions (NATURE, October 5, p. 90). The science of man, as a biological phenomenon that changes the aspect of the inanimate world and interferes with most branches of living matter—as an organism the groups of which have a definite life-history of growth and decay of ability, sometimes called cycles of civilisation—or producing collective average mentality, which results in rapid expansion of ability combined with great destructiveness—in all these ways the science of man appears to stand, like geology or astronomy, apart from all introspection. The purely scientific study by comparison of these phenomena in mass-action, apart from individual movement, is as scientific as the study of mass-action of matter, physical and chemical, apart from tracing the movement of single atoms. The understanding of this seems to be academically needed if we are to escape from British narrowness, and see the world whole. F.R.S.; F.B.A.