

Our Bookshelf.

Archæology and Ethnography.

The Nile and Egyptian Civilization. By Prof. Alexandre Moret. Translated by M. R. Dobie. (The History of Civilization Series.) Pp. xxix + 497 + 24 plates. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd.; New York: Alfred A. Knopp, 1927.) 25s. net.

IN "From Tribe to Empire," Profs. Moret and M. G. Davy drew a picture of the growth of civilisation in the favoured area of the Mediterranean and Near East, taking this to include Mesopotamia. The former now turns to a more intensive study of one of the three great cultures included in the area, namely, that of Egypt. As might be expected from Prof. Moret, the religious aspect is his special preoccupation; but in Egypt that is almost inevitable. For, as he points out, the character of the records from which our knowledge of Egyptian history is drawn, which are almost exclusively of a funerary or dedicatory nature, gives them the peculiarity of recording gratitude either towards god or the king.

Prof. Moret visualises Egyptian history, therefore, very largely in terms of the successive dominant religions. The worship of Ra represents the absolute domination of the king, the worship of Osiris the democratisation of the Empire, after an intermediate oligarchical stage, when the ascendancy of the clergy of Heliopolis led to the extension of privilege to the priestly class. In the light of these views, Prof. Moret is able to provide an interpretation of the obscure relations of Hatshepsut and Thothmes II. and Thothmes III., which is at least intelligible and, be it said, more reasonable than any hitherto put forward in view of the character of the latter monarch.

Racial Synthesis in Hindu Culture. By S. V. Viswanatha. (Truber's Oriental Series.) Pp. vii + 234. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1928.) 10s. 6d. net.

THIS book is interesting as symptomatic of the trend of opinion among certain sections of educated India. Its aim is to smooth away distinctions and to emphasise similarities and assimilations in the numerous elements of which the Indian peoples and Indian cultures are composed. Thus, while one school of students turns from the Indo-Aryan aspect of Indian civilisation to seek for the contribution of non-Aryan peoples, the author of this volume is concerned to show, without disregarding the non-Aryan element, that there has been a fusion which has evolved a type of civilisation common to the whole country sufficient to justify its treatment as a unit in the history of the social and intellectual development of mankind. This involves the assumption of a spirit of conciliation and compromise pervading relations among the various peoples of India. It is scarcely necessary to point out that this view of Indian history involves considerable re-reading of the evidence and a revision of accepted theory which are not likely to prove wholly convincing.

Astronomy.

The Constellations and their History. By the Rev. Charles Whyte. Pp. xii + 284 + 4 plates. (London: Charles Griffin and Co., Ltd., 1928.) 10s. 6d. net.

THE purpose of this book is to give an account of the constellations and stars from primitive times, which will be useful to beginners in astronomy. The first chapter contains a short account of the history of the constellation figures, and a map and description of the appearance of the heavens from the British Isles in each month of the year. This is followed by a section of about sixty pages, containing an account of the apparent motions, distances, and physical characteristics of the stars, and brief paragraphs on the nebulae and the structure of the universe and evolution of the stars. The remainder of the book consists of descriptions of the various constellations, with historical notes and information concerning the more interesting objects to be observed in them.

The structure of the book is well conceived, and if the material had been satisfactory the book would have occupied a decidedly useful place in astronomical literature. The amateur beginner, especially, would welcome a book of this type. It must be said, however, that in spite of the author's obvious conscientious efforts to perform his task as well and as thoroughly as possible, he has not succeeded in rising to the occasion which he has undoubtedly recognised. The language, dignified rather than inspiring, is not infrequently marred by grammatical errors and looseness or obscurity of phrasing. More serious still is a misleading lack of precision which permeates the whole work and makes it impossible to regard the book as a truly scientific one. Examples might be chosen from any part; it will suffice to mention the section on magnitudes (p. 51) and to quote the following sentence from p. 66: "The whiter a star is the hotter it becomes, while the redder it is the cooler it becomes." Serious inaccuracies are much less numerous than small defects of the kind just referred to, but they can, nevertheless, scarcely be described as rare. Laplace, for example, is credited with supposing that the nebular matter out of which, according to the nebular hypothesis, the solar system developed, was originally "absolutely stationary, and consequently could not revolve on its axis." In spite of much valuable information which the book contains, we cannot recommend it to those for whom a good book of its type would be most useful.

The Fundamentals of Astronomy. By Prof. S. A. Mitchell and Dr. C. G. Abbot. Pp. xi + 307. (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1927.) 15s. net.

THIS book is based on Dr. Abbot's previously published work, "The Earth and the Stars," and its scope and general character are in the main identical with those of its prototype. Large sections of the