

unfortunate reactions to which the revolt against those traditions may lead. After a study of Prof. Malinowski's work, we may indeed be inclined to think Mr. Ellis's statement that "Sex-taboos weigh at least as much on the civilised as on the savage mind" an under-statement.

GEORGE PITT-RIVERS.

### Our Bookshelf.

*West African Secret Societies: their Organisations, Officials and Teaching.* By Capt. F. W. Butt-Thompson. Pp. 320 + 12 plates. (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1929.) 21s. net.

THE West African secret societies, according to Capt. F. W. Butt-Thompson, fall into three groups: the mystic and religious, the democratic and patriotic, and the subversive and criminal; some are ancient pagan institutions, others are Mohammedan, there is a group of Mohammedan-pagan societies, and there are more modern ones. The various aspects and activities of the societies, such as organisation, officials, initiation, religious teaching, etc., are given in appropriate chapters with reference to particular societies; thus the reader can appreciate what factors are common to most of them, and so is enabled to gain a bird's-eye view, as it were, of their general functioning. Finally, there is a very brief account of each society.

This is the first systematic book on the subject, and the author is to be commended for the considerable amount of information here summarised. Judging from the bibliography, he has searched diligently through the literature which has any bearing on his subject, and he appears to have got into friendly contact with many Africans in the different countries of which he treats, especially in Sierra Leone, but unfortunately there is no indication concerning what is due to original observation and what is taken from published sources, so there is no means of gauging the reliability of the statements here made.

It is a book that tells in brief many things about which we should like to know more, and though Capt. Butt-Thompson records such information as may be obtained by a white man concerning the old social discipline and morality, there must be much more of which probably only an African can enlighten us. As in many primitive communities, some of the ethical teaching, such as that given on pp. 208-9, is good enough for any people to practise, however advanced their scale of life; for example, "Respect and obey your father and mother". "Be just to your enemy; rescue him when he is in danger, and never go out of your way to get him into trouble." "Stealing is undignified; if you covet a thing, ask for it; if it is refused, go without it." A people that preaches these maxims cannot lightly be dismissed as 'heathen', nor can their secret societies always be branded as 'wicked'. The author makes us wish that we could get into real and close touch with the teachers of these

doctrines, and work out with them a better and a fuller way of combining their knowledge and aspirations with our own for the benefit and advance of the African.

A. C. H.

*The Private Life of Tutankhamen: Love, Religion and Politics at the Court of an Egyptian King.* By G. R. Tabouis. Translated by M. R. Dobie. Pp. xxiii + 322 + 16 plates. (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1929.) 15s. net.

To attempt to recreate the atmosphere and reconstruct the conditions of a whole period of history so remote from our own times as the XVIIIth dynasty of ancient Egypt, requires considerable courage. It is a task to which the genius of the French language is perhaps more readily adaptable than our own. Certainly in one or two places this translation of Mlle. Tabouis' book on Tutankhamen carries less conviction than it would in the original. On the whole, however, it is a sound and informative piece of work such as should appeal strongly to the general public. The period with which she deals is one of the relatively few epochs in Egyptian history possessing an individuality and a character comprehensible by a reader who is not already acquainted with the phases of development of Egyptian culture in some detail.

An account of Akhenaton and his religious and social reforms necessarily occupies a prominent place in the book, which is thus given a certain dramatic unity, so much so that, instead of a life of Tutankhamen, it might well be regarded as the story of the rise and decay of the materialised ideal of a political and religious dreamer. M. Theodore Reinach contributes a preface, which is illuminating in the way it sets out in a few paragraphs the distinctive characteristics of Egyptian political development, which play so large a part in the history of Akhenaton's reforms, and also in giving the historical perspective necessary to appreciate the place of the XVIIIth Dynasty in Egyptian history.

*The Life of Space.* By Maurice Maeterlinck. Translated by Bernard Miall. Pp. 171. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1928.) 6s. net.

SINCE the publication of work on the theory of relativity during the War made this subject one of popular interest, there have been many attempts to interpret the significance of the theory in its relation to everyday life. The problem of the fourth dimension is one which occasionally is transformed from the symbolical language of mathematics to the imaginative fancy of popular writing. It is therefore with added interest that one turns to a book of this description by Maurice Maeterlinck. The work is divided into five sections, but the first one, namely, that of "The Fourth Dimension", is the longest and gives various references to writers who, like Hinton and Ouspensky, have devoted considerable thought to the implications of the fourth dimension. Maeterlinck then deals with "The Cultivation of