

appreciation" of the work of a British oil company, apparently sales and certainly reviews commended the volume to the technologist, a source of gratification to its author, who modestly reiterates in his second preface its real purpose: to serve the general reader.

Probably one of the chief reasons for the success of this essay is the fact that it is unique of its kind. At first glance one might wonder, and with every reason, what there was in the business of oilfield exploitation to appeal to anybody outside those directly concerned, outside the technical circle. But the story of a self-contained British community operating in alien country, contending not only with a difficult people, but also with Nature in her sternest mood, every individual and collective effort directed to one goal, the winning of petroleum and all that this to-day stands for, provides an author with a wealth of material, technical, human, psychological, social, out of which, if he be worthy of his pen, he cannot fail to make abundant literary capital.

The chief departure from the first edition is the inclusion of a chapter on "Oil and Ethics", which, designed to portray the achievement of the company concerned in correct perspective of international industry, throws into sharp relief the other part of the book. Otherwise the alterations are mainly those of righting mistakes, revising sections which clearly wanted attention in the original, and extending the information on those particular operations, for example, geophysical, which have been prominent in the interim. To criticisms made to the reviewer, that the title is an intended parody on a popular song, and that the book is an excellent form of publicity for a commercial undertaking, we reply that, even if either or both are justified, anything which brings home to the general reader what a wonderful substance is petroleum, what praiseworthy enterprise and high standard of human attainment are involved in its exploitation, deserves the fullest approval. H. B. M.

*Rudi Schneider: a Scientific Examination of his Mediumship.* By Harry Price. Pp. xv + 239 + 12 plates. (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1930.) 10s. 6d. net.

THIS volume gives an account of two series of sittings held under the auspices of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, of which the author is the honorary director. The medium in whose presence alleged psychic phenomena are said to have taken place was a young Austrian, by name Rudi Schneider, who with his brother Willi have for some years held the position of the principal European mediums for the so-called physical phenomena.

The present series of sittings is said to have been held primarily in order to interest as many scientific men as possible, although the list of sitters scarcely lends support to this statement.

The control of the medium and observers was mainly exercised by an electrical device whereby any movements which resulted in breaking the circle were registered by the extinction of certain

lights, and thus both medium and sitters were immobilised and (it is claimed) prevented from indulging in any trickery. Under these conditions a number of manifestations are recorded, such as the movements of objects without contact and the appearance of hands seemingly endowed with life. Notes were taken by a lady secretary, who dictated them into a dictaphone as the events occurred, but the few independent accounts that Mr. Price prints show that these notes should be regarded with some caution.

Generally speaking, the book is an interesting addition to the studies of the Schneider phenomena, although the treatment of past history is scarcely ingenuous. From its perusal the uninformed reader would scarcely gather that a formidable mass of evidence exists to justify suspicion regarding phenomena identical, or nearly so, with those now said to occur with the electrical control.

*A History of Medicine.* By R. McNair Wilson. (Benn's Sixpenny Library, No. 148.) Pp. 80. (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1930.) 6d.

IN a very small compass, the author gives an excellent survey of medical history. Beginning with the medicine of the Greeks, he emphasises the influence of Hippocratic humoral conceptions and the later Roman 'methodist' theory and the Galenic theory of the pneuma upon the development of medical science. An admirable plea for recognition of the value of earlier English medicine is made, with special reference to the works of Harvey and Sydenham. Jenner's discovery of the use of vaccines is also well described, and this is followed by a good analysis of the work of Pasteur. From 1880, great strides have been made in antiseptic surgery and the application of anti-toxic sera, and the author gives his readers a glimpse into this revolutionary period in medical history.

The book terminates with a brief review of the development of preventive medicine which has resulted in the establishment of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Research Council, the study of mental sickness, and cancer research. The work is altogether a splendid effort, and may be read with interest, both by medicals and laymen.

*Plant Biology: an Outline of the Principles underlying Plant Activity and Structure.* By Dr. H. Godwin. Pp. x + 265. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1930.) 8s. 6d. net.

ELEMENTARY text-books of botany usually bear a strong family resemblance, and it is therefore a pleasure to notice one bearing the hall-mark of individuality. This book treats the plant as an active unit, and at the same time emphasises the physico-chemical bases on which it works. Particularly useful are the schemes showing the types of metabolism and energy relations of the yeasts and bacteria. We may welcome also the illustration of the tissue elements as solid objects, and also the developmental treatment given to the morphology of flowering plants.