

these he collects the latest and most striking scientific observations or theories, and ends with a short exhortation to mankind to emulate Nature and try to organise society as efficiently as Nature has organised the community of cells in his own body. That is the philosophy or moral of the book, so far as it has one, but the author certainly did not start with any philosophic purpose in mind. He is intensely interested in all the recent discoveries and is anxious that the educated public should share his interest.

Of the three main sections, that on life is the fuller and bears more trace of intimate personal knowledge and research. The astronomical section mostly follows the lines with which Sir James Jeans has made us familiar.

A word should be added on the abundant and most ingenious and suggestive illustrations. They could scarcely be better for the purpose in view.

F. S. M.

The Girdle of Chastity: a Medico-Historical Study.

By Eric John Dingwall. Pp. x + 171 + 10 plates. (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1931.) 10s. 6d. net.

IN this work, which forms an interesting companion volume to the author's study of male infibulation reviewed in these columns some years ago (*NATURE*, 97, 150; 1926), Dr. E. J. Dingwall makes a survey of the history and use of the girdle of chastity from the twelfth century down to the present day. Evidence is brought forward to show that the idea of the girdle of chastity is derived from that of female infibulation which originated in the East.

Seven types of girdles are discussed, the earliest being that described by Kyeser von Eichstadt in his military encyclopædia entitled "Bellifortis", of which the MS. in the library at Göttingen is dated 1405, and the latest that devised by John Moodie, a Scottish doctor, as a means of preventing masturbation and seduction, and described by him in a work published at Edinburgh in 1848. A special chapter is devoted to the forensic aspects of the subject, and is followed by one dealing with the references to the girdle of chastity in belletristic literature from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. The text is illustrated by photographs and drawings of various girdles in different museums in Europe.

The author is to be congratulated not only for having produced a richly documented and very readable work, but also for continuing his valuable researches in the sexuological department of anthropology, which is still taboo to the great majority of the medical profession in Great Britain.

Philosophy.

Cosmic Problems: an Essay on Speculative Philosophy. By Prof. J. S. Mackenzie. Pp. ix + 122. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1931.) 6s. net.

THE author of this book is not only a distinguished figure in the philosophical world, but also a teacher honoured by many hundreds of his former students. His power as a teacher, as well as a thinker, is manifest in all that he writes. He has the gift of

making difficult matters seem at least not hopelessly incomprehensible. Indeed, he seems in some danger of sharing the philosophic fate of J. S. Mill, of whom it has been said that he made the mistake of writing clearly enough to be found out.

Throughout his career, Prof. Mackenzie has, as is well known, followed the line of idealistic speculation, and during that time there has not been, on the whole, much commerce between science and philosophy. But in these days, science has become philosophical, and some men of science, such as Whitehead and Russell, have become philosophers. Modern theories of evolution and of the spatio-temporal system are bound to be taken into account by speculative philosophy. In a series of short chapters, Prof. Mackenzie takes up one after another of the problems so raised, and tries to remove some of the difficulties in the way of a solution. For their complete removal, he says, the co-operation of the special sciences is required, and "happily there is now no real opposition between the results of the special sciences and the demands of speculative thought".

Orpheus: a History of Religions. By Salomon Reinach. Revised and partly rewritten. Translated by Florence Simmonds. Pp. ix + 487. (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1931.) 15s. net.

THIS new and revised Anglo-American edition of M. Salomon Reinach's well-known history of religions, which in France has now reached its thirty-eighth edition, brings the survey of the religious movement in the modern world fully up to date. Here M. Reinach is amusing as well as instructive. In dealing with earlier times and other types of religion, the chapter on Christian origins has been almost entirely rewritten in the light of the fresh evidence furnished by the Emperor Claudian's letter to the Alexandrian community and by the Slavonic text of Josephus relating to Jesus, discovered some years ago and brought to the notice of the learned world in 1925. M. Reinach's interpretation of these two documents gives an entirely new conception of the course of events in Jerusalem leading up to the Crucifixion; for he concludes that the unnamed leader of the insurrection, which the text of Josephus states was in contemplation, was, in fact, Jesus.

Physics.

A Survey of Physics. By Prof. Frederick A. Saunders. Pp. x + 635 + 8. (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd.; New York: Henry Holt and Co., n.d.) 14s. net.

THE title of this volume is attractive, for it suggests a more interesting and readable account of physical phenomena and theories than is given in the ordinary textbook. This anticipation is realised in full measure, for Prof. Saunders of Harvard has been markedly successful in collecting novel illustrations of physical principles and in instilling the spirit of the scientific investigator. The gyrosopic ship-stabiliser, the diffusion or condensation pump, the Shortt clock, the internal combustion engine, the