

of water; the expositor of to-day, faced with an array of photons, neutrons, diplons and positrons, has a different and difficult row to hoe. Sir William accomplishes the feat in a characteristically genial and effortless manner, clinching his appeal to theory by admirably conceived experiments, and stimulating the interest of his hearers (and readers) by illustrations—the laws of perspective, Japanese mirrors, rearlight reflectors, the lustre of sateen, and so forth—which keep us constantly in touch with reality. *Ars est celare artem*; and, as with Boswell's report of the famous dinner episode, it seems very easy until one tries to do it for one's self.

The nature of light, the eye and vision, colour and its origin, the colour of the sky, polarisation, light from the sun and stars, Röntgen radiation, and, finally, the wave and the corpuscle—this outline of the topics treated in the book shows how wide a range is covered by these lectures, which are as delightful to read as they must have been to hear. Reflection at a plane surface in the opening chapter, electron diffraction at the close of the book—it is a long and involved journey which we cover in less than three hundred pages, and there is not a dull moment on the way.

But surely Eros is playing an unaccustomed rôle in astronomy!
ALLAN FERGUSON.

Short Reviews

Proceedings of the American Society for Psychological Research. Vol. 22: *The Margery Mediumship—The "Walter" Hands: a Study of their Dermatoglyphics*. By Brackett K. Thorogood. Pp. xix + 228 + 123 plates. (New York: American Society for Psychological Research, 1933.) n.p.

THIS volume is a detailed account of certain alleged supernormal phenomena which occur in the presence of the medium 'Margery' (Mrs. L. R. G. Crandon, of Boston, Mass.). They consist mainly in the impressions of thumbs in dental wax, and an account by Dr. R. J. Tillyard of the conditions under which they are produced was printed in NATURE for August 18, 1928, pp. 243 ff., where Fig. 6 is a photograph of one of these impressions. In the leading article of the same date it was pointed out how, assuming the accuracy of Dr. Tillyard's observations, we had little reason to deny the medium's power of producing the thumb-prints of anyone either living or dead. Since then the claim has been made that such prints of living persons (for example, Sir Oliver Lodge) have been produced, but the most interesting development is the alleged discovery that the very large number of prints said to have been made by 'Walter' (the deceased brother of the medium and her 'spirit control') are in reality identical with those of a person living in Boston, who formerly attended a number of sittings and first suggested to 'Margery' the use of dental wax as a convenient compound.

In the case of the right thumb-print some forty points of similarity are admitted by both sides: in the case of the left, identity appears to be absolute, although the president of the American Society for Psychological Research now claims that the examples printed previously in the Society's publications were not authentic, being substitutions on the part of one of the leading investigators; through carelessness they were not noticed at the time.

It is clearly impossible here to evaluate the evidence or even to discuss it, since the data on

which the various arguments are based are themselves suspect. Indeed, the report illustrates with startling clarity the reasons why the scientific world remains aloof. For from whatever point of view this report may be regarded, it is not only the medium but also the officials themselves who are being denounced as incompetent and guilty of a series of dubious manœuvres.

Encyclopædia of Psychic Science. By Dr. Nandor Fodor. Pp. lv + 416. (London: Arthurs Press, Ltd., 1933.) 30s. net.

THIS book, in spite of its somewhat provoking title, is a notable addition to the literature of psychological research. The author, who, it may be said, is clearly inclined to believe far more than the evidence suggests, has nevertheless succeeded in putting together a mass of material which includes many facts pointing to conclusions not in accordance with his own. The impartiality he displays in printing these data is highly commendable, and some good examples of it may be seen in the articles on Eldred and Duguid.

In his preface Dr. Fodor stresses the difficulties of compiling an encyclopædia of this kind, and states that he should have been assisted by an editorial committee. In this we are inclined to agree. Although he is fully capable of presenting his material, he is naturally not quite fully acquainted with it. Thus the article on "ectoplasm" (apart from a few amazing examples of credulity) is an excellent summary; whilst that on the poltergeist is very poor. In the latter article there are several cases from newspapers whereas there is no word of Dibbesdorf, of Stans, or of Oakland, California! Similarly, in the body of the text we find omissions for which it is not easy to account. Among these we would mention Farmer Riley, Abraham Cummings, Nicolai, Staudenmaier and the Gallery of Spirit Art. Although actual mistakes are readily excusable in a work of this size, it is curious that Dr. Fodor should make Patience Worth masculine, Mrs. Abbott and Lulu Hurst