

Short Notices

Scottish Folk-Lore and Folk Life: Studies in Race, Culture and Tradition. By Donald A. Mackenzie. Pp. ix+310. (London, Glasgow and Bombay: Blackie and Son, Ltd., 1935.) 10s. 6d. net.

MR. MACKENZIE gives his readers a comprehensive view of the main heads of Scottish folk-tradition and belief. He ranges from food taboos to giants, fairies and goddesses. One of the more remarkable of the topics with which he deals is the attitude of the Scottish people towards the pig. Among the other peoples of Britain it has always been more or less a staple article of diet; but in Scotland, although there is evidence that it was eaten and was a victim in sacrifice, generally, or at least widely, it has been avoided as an article of food. Mr. Mackenzie holds that this attitude is pre-Christian, and derives it from the East, whence he thinks it may have been taken by the eastern Celts from Attis worship and the legend of the slaying of the god by a boar.

Current theories on the Celtic (or 'Keltic') question find little favour with the author, and he will not tolerate views which make Scotland dependent upon Ireland. In race and in folk-lore and tradition, he argues strongly for the individuality of Scotland, which he maintains has developed on the whole with singular freedom from alien influence. On the other hand, he seeks to show that in such matters as the food taboo, already mentioned, and the belief in mother-goddesses, there is cogent evidence of a cultural diffusion from the East. Mr. Mackenzie might have been more convincing had his treatment been more systematic, and loose statements and slips less frequent. "Alpine" and "Armenoid", for example, as racial terms are not interchangeable. La Tène is not "early" Iron Age and "the late Mr. Gray" could not have measured 5,000 recruits during the War, as, to the regret of his friends, he died two years before it began.

New Light on Old Masters. By Prof. A. P. Laurie. Pp. 163+12 plates. (London: The Sheldon Press; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935.) 6s. net.

IN this book, miraculously compressed to a modest 163 pages, is summarised that fund of information on the painter's methods and materials so authoritatively expounded in Prof. Laurie's earlier volumes. To effect this sweeping condensation, without sacrificing the scientific and historical approach, must have been extraordinarily difficult; but Prof. Laurie, by pursuing the substance rather than the form, has contrived not only to retain practically every significant fact from his earlier works, but also to introduce many new ones. Obviously, he has made certain unwilling sacrifices of style and spaciousness: occasionally, an argument has been so condensed as to lead perilously near to a brilliant *non sequitur*. But his matter is intensely interesting.

A concise opening survey of the development of the palette precedes a description of Italian quattrocento painting methods, as set forth in the "Libro

dell' Arte" of Cennino Cennini; and a later chapter on the Van Eyck technique is particularly good. The final section, on scientific examination of paintings—a field wherein Prof. Laurie has been a bold pioneer—is illustrated by references to actual problems encountered. One could wish that the author had underlined more heavily the present limitations of certain scientific weapons: for many who should know better tend nowadays to regard, for example, X-ray examination of any painting as an unfailing criterion of pedigree, provenance and general respectability. P. D. R.

The Neural Basis of Thought. By George G. Campion and Sir Grafton Elliot-Smith. (International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method.) Pp. vi+167. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd.; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934.) 9s. net.

THIS book takes its stand on the view that the terms which are used in thinking processes are constantly changing and developing, and in reality display none of that fixity which has sometimes been considered to be the main characteristic of the 'concept'. It is suggested that this is due to the fact that the material of thought is always being influenced by affective or emotional responses. Head and Holmes have demonstrated that in "some way the essential organs of the thalami are the centre of consciousness for the affective side of sensation". There are, as is well-known, innumerable paths of connexion between the thalami and the cortex. The authors hold that these "are return paths for reflex neural impulses from the cortex which excite relay cells in the thalami, and that these relay cells in turn send stimuli both to the essential thalamic organs and also to the same cortical areas from which the paths conveying the return impulse originated". Hence it is argued that thought processes must be pictured as based upon a constantly circulating stream of neural impulse from cortex to thalami and from thalami to cortex.

Measures and Weights. By Sir Flinders Petrie. Pp. x+22. (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1934.) 2s. net.

IN this little book, Sir Flinders Petrie returns with the added experience of his excavations in southern Palestine to a subject of which he has always stressed the significance. "The study of ancient measures used in a country," he says here, "is a basis for discovering the movements of civilization between countries. The study of ancient weights serves to show the trade connections at any given period." Beyond his introductory remarks, however, Sir Flinders does not discuss the general principles, with which he has dealt elsewhere, but outlines the subject only for ready reference as to detail in the practical work of the archæologist.