

Weather Parallels and Paradoxes

(1) Through the Weather House :

or, The Wind, the Rain, and Six Hundred Miles Above. By R. A. Watson Watt. Pp. xi+192+8 plates. (London: Peter Davies, Ltd., 1935.) 7s. 6d. net.

(2) Weather Proverbs and Paradoxes

By Dr. W. J. Humphreys. Second edition. Pp. xii+126+16 plates. (Baltimore, Md.: The Williams and Wilkins Co.; London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1934.) 9s.

(1) **E**ARLY in 1934, Mr. Watson Watt gave a series of broadcast talks on weather which attracted considerable interest from the novelty of the treatment and the vividness of the imagery. These talks have now been published in a very readable book, illustrated by some good cloud pictures. The "Weather House" as pictured in the frontispiece is a super-sky-scraper of ultra-modern design, with a hundred stories each six miles high, fitted with all modern conveniences in the form of electric lighting, heating and decoration, and all supplied by 'wireless'.

The matter is the familiar matter of any popular textbook on meteorology, with a few additions from the author's special sphere of research, but the exposition is very clear and is certainly helped by the analogies with domestic appliances, though to the meteorologist these become a little tedious at times. Water in various forms naturally plays a large part—"Damp in the Weather House", "Cloud-Weaving", and "The Water Supply", but the author is most at home in the upper stories and his treatment of atmospheric electricity, the ionosphere, ozone and meteors ("Throwing Stones at the Weather House") is especially good. Unusual also is his account of the organisation of synoptic forecasting in a meteorological office—"The Servants' Quarters"—for when looking at a

weather map one is apt to forget, for example, the "comrade in Moscow stamping through the snow" to read his instruments. There is much sound sense if little enthusiasm in the short chapters on "Saws, Saints and Sages", "Controlling the Weather", and "Further Outlook—?"; the last chapter in fact is definitely pessimistic; but the warning is timely.

(2) Weather proverbs are many and varied; some are useless but others contain a grain of truth. Prof. Humphreys sets out to rescue the latter from their undesirable companions, and to clothe them in a garb of logic. The result is an attractive essay in popular science, though not everyone would agree that all the selections are justified, and a few of the explanations seem a little far-fetched. The belief that a grey morning sky betokens a fine day may be capable of explanation, but a 'grey' sky is presumably an overcast sky, and in Great Britain the observations of Spencer Russell have shown that an overcast sky at sunrise is about as likely to be followed by rain before sunset as is a red morning sky. One proverb with at least as much justification as the grey sky at morning has been omitted from the chosen company, namely:

"Rain before seven
Lift before eleven."

We should like to see more of these proverbs subjected to the test of observation. A few of them are probably true of North America, but will not bear transplanting to Great Britain. Some of the "paradoxes" of part 2 are rather forced, but a few provide interesting examples of the curious working of physical laws. On the whole, the selection, like that of the proverbs, is good, while there can be no two opinions about the excellence of the sixteen plates.

Spektroskopie

Von Prof. Dr. Karl Wilh. Meissner. (Sammlung Götschen, Band 1091.) Pp. 180. (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter und Co., 1935.) 1.62 gold marks.

THIS little book is not intended for spectroscopists, but rather for non-specialised students of physics who need a straightforward elementary account of spectroscopic principles and methods. The scope is wide, scarcely any major branch of the subject escaping at least brief notice, the presentation orderly and clear, and the diagrams astonishingly numerous in

relation to the low price of the book. The emphasis is laid, on the whole, on the instrumental side of the subject, and the explanations of the various types of high-resolution spectroscopy are particularly well done.

It is, in fact, just the right kind of book for an honours student of physics who wishes to read some German, for, though simple in style and in matter, it is yet sufficiently informative to be read for its own sake and not merely for reading practice.