

## Short Notices

### Archæology and Anthropology

#### The Law and the Prophets

By H. Peake and H. J. Fleure. (The Corridors of Time, Vol. 9.) Pp. viii+188. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1936.) 5s. net.

In each succeeding volume of "The Corridors of Time", the authors have sought to epitomize the salient characters of a period, as well as mark the cultural advance recorded. In electing to close the series with "The Law and the Prophets", they indicate that they see the transition from archæology to history, not so much as a matter of written record, as the dawn of abstract thought and the initiation of a concept of godhead, which transcends the tribalized or local deity. This is a logical scheme, but in practice it is apt to leave ragged edges.

Broadly speaking, this volume covers the last millennium B.C., coinciding, however, more or less with the Iron Age, rather than with any absolute span in term of years. It opens with the rise of the Scyths, passes then to Assyria, China of the Chou Dynasty and the philosophers, India, where the racial problem is further discussed in the light of the last census report, the rise and fall of the Jewish kingdom, Persia, Greece and the rise of Greek philosophy, and the Iron Age of Italy, of Central Europe and finally of the British Isles. As the authors have been constrained by their plan to deal very briefly with a vast body of material, which in large part is historical, their method of treatment has been cramped, and they have been able to devote too little space to the archæological argument, in which, as is shown in the admirable, if brief, summary of the results of latest research in the British Isles, their power of acute and suggestive reasoning most frequently illuminates the evidence.

A welcome announcement states that a supplementary volume will deal with the processes of racial and social evolution of man in general terms.

#### Bitumen and Petroleum in Antiquity

By R. J. Forbes. Pp. vi+109. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1936.) 2 f.; 5s.

KNOWLEDGE of the technology of bitumen in antiquity has been considerably extended by the recent excavations at Ur and elsewhere in Mesopotamia. Mr. R. J. Forbes, though a technical expert and not an archæologist, has made a comprehensive survey of the archæological and literary sources for the use of bitumen in ancient times, and discusses fully the information relating to the character, sources and uses of the material to be derived from this evidence.

Although known and used from very early times, the importance of bitumen and oil in industry and commerce is a modern development, their place

having been taken by pitch produced from wood from Roman times onward, except in the manufacture of 'Greek fire', of which the use, it was agreed among the nations in medieval times, was "too barbarous" for war. This oblivion, which became more or less complete in the Middle Ages, Mr. Forbes attributes to the fact that not only were the ancients impressed by the dangers of handling the material, but also the principal sources of supply lay outside the bounds of the Roman Empire in the eastern sector of the Fertile Crescent, and more especially on the eastern side of the Dead Sea and in Mesopotamia.

Mr. Forbes, on the whole, agrees with the view that the use of bitumen by the Egyptians in embalming is late and not so extensive as was once thought. At the same time, he points out that the importance attached by the Egyptians in Ptolemaic times to control of the area in Palestine in which it occurred, must be regarded as significant. His examination of the uses of bitumen in building construction in early Mesopotamia and at Mohenjo-daro will afford valuable guidance to field archæologists.

### Biology

#### Rhododendrons and Azaleas:

their Origins, Cultivation and Development. By Clement Gray Bowers. Pp. xiv+549+40 plates. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936.) 42s. net.

As announced in the preface, this book is concerned with the practical use of rhododendrons and azaleas in North America and elsewhere. In England much valuable experience has already been gained with the genus, and made public by the Rhododendron Society and Rhododendron Association. Full use of this information has been made by Mr. Bowers and he is to be congratulated on having provided a very useful compendium on the genus, especially for American readers. His chapter on the behaviour of new introductions in America should be of special interest to growers in Great Britain, where diversities of climate are not nearly so great.

Inside the covers of the book are two highly decorative maps of that part of the Old World and of North America wherein rhododendrons are found, the numbers in red referring to the geographical regions mentioned in the text. It is a pity, however, that the distribution of the outlying species, *R. Lochæ*, in Queensland should have been omitted, the presence of this species on a remote mountain being of considerable phytogeographical interest.

The coloured illustrations are very poor and not worthy of the book. Indeed, they seem more suitable as designs for wallpaper-panels. The black-and-white figures, however, though crude, often give quite a good impression of the species, which may sometimes