It is perhaps too late to hope that the "recordist" may join the mortician, but it is not too late to kill the adjective "microgenic". The translator comes near distortion, for the ordinary reader, when he renders "Plastik" as "plastic", and goes beyond it for the ordinary viewer when he talks of a film called "President Vanisher".

The author's philosophy of film æsthetic is somewhat superficial, a fair recognition of the validity of expressionism in the music being marred by over-insistence on representationalism in the picture. To talk of the hand-written sound-track, with its vast possibilities, at some length is wise and discriminating; to talk of it as "quite unreal sound", "a magic realm created out of nothing" is nonsense. The Beethoven symphonies were "quite unreal sound", "a magic realm created out of nothing", in exactly the same sense; the orthodox score, the photographed sound track, and the hand-written track are all of them arbitrary notations containing, for the initiated, the prescription for producing real sound out of unreal sound.

Dr. London's book is the more welcome in giving so much enjoyable ground for disagreement; it is attractive, suggestive and educative. No one who recognizes the power of the sound film in modifying the taste of the citizens of to-day and to-morrow can afford to neglect it. Its attractions are enhanced by the many facsimile reproductions from film-music scores.

Science in Recent Years

The March of Science:
a First Quinquennial Review, 1931–1935. By Various Authors. Issued under the authority of the Council of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Pp. viii +215. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1937.) 3*s*. 6*d*. net.

THIS book is the first of a new series of volumes wherein, it is intended, the advances made in the chief branches of pure science over a period of five years will be described in plain language by experts. These books are intended both for ordinary readers of scientific tastes and for those workers in any one branch of science who would like to learn with a minimum of trouble what is new and important in other branches. The style and difficulty is, in consequence, somewhere between those of the illustrated popular expositions and the learned reports for the specialist in his own science. Editors and publishers have attempted this kind of books in the past, sometimes with success, but it is good news that the Council of the British Association with its wide knowledge of the right contributors has now begun this work. The chief difficulty of such enterprises is, of course, in getting the best men to take the peculiar trouble which semi-popular exposition demands.

The present volume deserves a warm welcome from readers. It is rare that a permanent work, so homely in appearance, has such distinguished contributors. There are no illustrations. The price is modest. There are sixteen chapters or sections (varying from 2,500 to 6,000 words in length) by different writers, each of whom is distinguished in his own subject. Nearly all of these have done the journeyman work of compiling and writing satisfactorily, and some have done it very well. On the whole, the more eminent authorities have done their tasks better than the less. The sections on cosmical physics (Sir James Jeans), economic science (Sir Josiah Stamp), biochemistry (Sir F. Gowland Hopkins), and science and industry (Sir Frank Smith) are models of the thing required—apposite, informed, fair, well-expressed, neither too technical nor too popular for the readers envisaged. The important discoveries or developments in these subjects in the past five years are singled out and well described. The reader who has, perhaps, heard vaguely of some of these in talk can now know where the main interests of a diversity of subjects lie, what has been proved, what is still speculation, whither progress is tending and how good are prospects. Good also, although less distinguished, are the sections on geology (P. G. H. Boswell), geography (G. R. Crone), educational science (A. Gray Jones), agricultural science (J. A. S. Watson) and physiology (L. E. Bayliss).

It is chiefly in the sections on physics and physical chemistry that a bareness of treatment is revealed. Chemistry has sections on 'physical' and 'organic'. The former, however, should more properly have been called 'general'. The section is good as that, but it contains little of the advances in subjects like gas reactions, photochemistry, solution, catalysis. The writer on physics had a peculiarly hard task within his limits of difficulty and space. (Two sections might well have been allotted to this large field.) Unfortunately, however, he opened with an account of nineteenth-century physics, excellent in itself but largely irrelevant there, and so left himself too little space for some of the important revelations of the past five years. Dr. de Beer, on the other hand, has perhaps erred by excess of zeal. Compared with the other sections, his on zoology is too full, too well documented. But it cannot be criticized on other grounds. A. S. R.