

The Nature of Human Nature :

and other Essays in Social Psychology. By Prof. Ellsworth Faris. (McGraw-Hill Publications in Sociology.) Pp. xii+370. (New York and London : McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1937.) 21s.

AMERICAN sociology has been often described as suffering from two major though mutually exclusive complaints : a tendency to systematization which borders on vacuous verbosity ; or, in contrast, a raw empiricism satisfied with increasingly detailed descriptions and the endless and aimless collection of fact, numerical in preference. On the whole, this indictment is as unfair as in a few exceptional cases it is amusingly apposite.

The present volume by one of the veterans of American sociology is a proof that Prof. Faris—and he represents the best and most numerous group of his colleagues—can be at the same time concrete and theoretically inspired ; interested in facts, yet always infusing them with theoretical insight and human sympathy. The volume consists of collected essays ranging over a variety of subjects, and written over a period of years.

Some of the chapters are vigorously controversial. His robust, almost brutal handling of Pareto will be a delight to those of us who dislike irrational fashions in science (or pseudo-science) and quasi-religious cults in abstract sociology. The chapters on race and racial problems show once more the American mind at its best. Prof. Faris is, needless to say, strongly opposed to all extreme racial theories. He does not, however, dismiss the factor of race as a mere figment but deals with it in a truly scientific spirit. The group of essays on ethnographical subjects are based on the author's personal acquaintance with Central Africa, where he has lived for seven years. In his treatment of psycho-analysis and behaviourism, in the fundamental problem of human instincts in society and in his discussion of the Jewish question, we find everywhere an outspoken, honest, shrewd and at the same time, widely read and rarely cultivated mind. The book is written in simple and direct English ; it is witty and full of vigour ; it is as interesting as it is instructive ; it vindicates the scientific character of American sociology.

B. M.

Comets :

their Nature, Origin and Place in the Science of Astronomy. By Mary Proctor and Dr. A. C. D. Crommelin. Pp. xi+204. (London : The Technical Press, Ltd., 1937.) 8s. 6d. net.

THIS work is written in simple and non-technical language and for this reason it will prove attractive to the general reader. The student of astronomy too will find it a most useful book, especially for references, as it supplies very useful information on famous comet hunters and also on the history of some of our well-known comets, Pons-Coggia-Winnecke-Forbes, Halley, Biela, Encke, etc. There is a description of the return of Halley's Comet in 1910—a return which caused considerable interest in the astronomical world especially, as Drs. Cowell and Crommelin had devoted a lot of time to the

computation of the perturbations by the planets. They predicted the time of perihelion passage as April 17, 1910, and this prediction was correct to less than three days.

Miss Proctor's father, Richard A. Proctor, showed many years ago that there were insuperable difficulties against the theory of the capture of comets by planets, and this is discussed in the present book. Dr. Crommelin supports Proctor's position and has devoted much attention to the view that the comets are not extra-solar. He agrees with Proctor that the short-period comets were expelled from the giant planets, but considers that Proctor was in error in postulating this expulsion millions of years ago. Crommelin believes that it took place in comparatively recent times—a view which is supported by the well-known fact that these short-period comets are rapidly disintegrating and last only a few centuries, not millions of years.

The book has a number of useful illustrations and an index is a great convenience. It is a very readable and interesting work.

M. D.

Das Gallium :

eine kritische Würdigung der Erkenntnisse mit experimentellen Beiträgen. Von Dr. Erich Einecke. Pp. 155. (Leipzig : Leopold Voss, 1937.) 12 gold marks.

THIS monograph gives a detailed account of the element gallium, which is now available on the market. After a historical introduction, it specifies the sources of gallium and the methods of extracting the element from them. The physical and chemical properties of gallium and of its alloys and compounds, including organo-metallic compounds, and the analysis of gallium, are described with 450 references to literature and 15 patents. Since 1932 gallium has been separated from the by-products of the copper schist of Mansfeld by the Vereinigten Chemischen Fabriken at Leopoldshall, and the price is now about 10 marks per gram. The metal has a very low melting point, 29.78°, and remains supercooled much below 0°, and a high boiling point, so that its use in high-temperature thermometers in quartz has been the object of research. Gallium compounds have also found application in pharmacy. The book contains some original observations by the author and is a valuable survey of the present knowledge of gallium and its compounds.

Photography

By Dr. C. E. Kenneth Mees. Pp. xii+214+63 plates. (London : G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1936.) 7s. 6d. net.

IN January 1936 the "Christmas Lectures" at the Royal Institution were given by Dr. Mees. His book covers the ground of the lectures in a very readable and extremely well-illustrated way. The history of photography is fairly fully summarized in a chapter of thirty-three pages. Another chapter describes the manufacture of photographic materials. The remainder of the book deals with the principles and applications of photography.