

who took to town life. Urban life is not so well tolerated by the Negro as by the white, the advantages of a relative immunity to some infections such as scarlet fever, diphtheria and erysipelas being more than counterbalanced by a greater liability to bronchitis, pneumonia and other diseases of towns. The great trek of 1917-18 to the cities of the north which resulted from restriction of alien immigration therefore exacted at first a heavy toll on the balance of births over deaths, but the adjustment was made.

At present, according to all available measures of fertility, the Negro women are reproducing more rapidly than the white women in the United

States, and taking into account their greater death-rate, Prof. Holmes concludes that there is at the moment a neck and neck race with a fair prospect that the Negro may soon be increasing at the faster pace. This depends on many uncertainties; such as the increasing use of contraceptives in rural communities and the conquest of the scourge of venereal disease. It is a problem which will engage the attention of students of population and eventually of administrators to an increasing degree, and Prof. Holmes has rendered no small service by gathering together such a wealth of statistical material and interpreting it with such commendable caution. P. S.

## Early French Men of Science

### Figures de Savants

Tome 3 : l'Académie des Sciences et l'Étude de la France d'Outre-Mer de la Fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle au Début du XIX<sup>e</sup>. 1 : Antilles et Guyane. Par Alfred Lacroix. Pp. xiii + 220 + 38 plates. 125 francs. Tome 4 : l'Académie des Sciences et l'Étude de la France d'Outre-Mer de la Fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle au Début du XIX<sup>e</sup>. 2 : Mascareignes, Madagascar, Inde, Indochine, Pacifique. Par Alfred Lacroix. Pp. iv + 259 + 59 plates. 150 francs. (Paris : Gauthier-Villars, 1938.)

**I**N these two well illustrated volumes, the permanent secretary of the Paris Academy of Sciences has collected a very useful and instructive series of short notices of the distinguished Frenchmen who promoted the cause of science in the French Empire during the later part of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The Academy itself, of which M. Lacroix gives a short account, had during the seventeenth century no permanent home. It received help from Colbert, who was always prepared to further French colonial interests, and it was finally installed in the Louvre by the King in January 1699.

In these volumes, the men of science dealt with appear under a geographical arrangement. Vol. 3 contains notices of those working in the West Indies, Guiana, the Mascarene Islands, Madagascar, India and Indo-China. The last four countries are again represented in vol. 4 together with West Africa. A separate section in this volume is devoted to the family of Jussieu, five of whom were distinguished naturalists. The volume ends with a plea for some central organization to deal with research at the present day.

It is not possible in a short space to give an adequate idea of the wealth of information which

M. Lacroix has collected in these four hundred and fifty pages. The particular interest of the Academy in astronomy and physics is represented, for example, by Jean Richer's mission to Guiana in 1666 and by a similar mission of La Condamine in Peru and Guiana. Richer's work on gravity was of outstanding importance. Similarly we have a picture of Peyssonnel and his work on the polyps, begun in the Mediterranean and completed in Guadaloupe. He received little recognition at the time in France, but his work was published by the Royal Society and he was made a foreign member. Bouvet, better known as the discoverer of a small island to the south of Africa, is shown in these pages as the patron of Poivre, who did valuable work on spices. Two other notable explorers, Kerguelen and Lapérouse, appear in a more familiar setting. Sir Joseph Banks is mentioned several times. His intervention secured the return to France of the botanical collections of La Billardière after their capture by the Dutch. Some interesting correspondence on this matter, and on the question of Sir Joseph's failure to secure election to the Academy, and a similar failure of Jussieu to secure election to the Royal Society, is reproduced.

The omission to index a reproduction of a letter of Jussieu to the Minister of Police has made the references to the portrait of Banks (Pl. xlvi) and a facsimile reproduction of his letter to Delambre (Pl. xlix), and of subsequent plates incorrect, while the numbering twice over of Plate xxxix in the "Explication des Planches" has thrown all subsequent references therein wrong. But these are trifling inconveniences in a work which is full of illuminating if disjointed appreciations of the great men of science of France. J. N. L. B.