

it had now become inarticulate. Why? Because, in essence, it lacked three things, all-vital to progress in metaphysics. They were (1) a fixed and accepted terminology, (2) a common method, and (3) definition. Naturally, the first two were unlikely to be accorded much constructive sympathy, the Society being what, in fact, it was. The third fared rather better; but in any event Manning was scarcely the character to carry agnostics with him on such matters. Nevertheless, a committee was appointed to struggle with definition; who its members were is unknown. All this goes to show that the subject of semantics (or semiotics) was then in the minds of advanced thinkers, not, of course, by any means for the first time, but perhaps in a form capable of emergence later into an exact discipline.

Much of this mental strife concerned mainly the particular age covered by the Society's active life; two legacies, however, were bequeathed to posterity, and these deserve special mention. In 1875, George Croom Robertson, a member, issued a prospectus which resulted in the publication of *Mind*; and in 1879 Shadworth Hodgson, another member, founded the Aristotelian Society. How much later generations of philosophers, metaphysicians and psychologists owe to these two enterprises is hard to assess; but obviously their debt is great. Had not Lady Augusta Stanley 'intervened' at the beginning, would these two ventures ever have materialized?

In spite of all, on November 16, 1880, the Metaphysical Society died by its own hand, much, if not all, of its self-imposed duty done, and its torch, still gently aflame, passing into other hands. Members had "chattered metaphysics", as Tennyson once put it, for more than a decade, and with results little short of miraculous. Seen, nearly seventy years after death, upon the pages of Prof. A. W. Brown's stately volume, it yet represents what it always was, a company of inspired amateurs, hammering away relentlessly to liberate the truth as they conceived it, and presenting their treasure with the transparent sincerity of great Victorians.

F. I. G. RAWLINS

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TROPICAL AGRICULTURE

A Handbook of Tropical Agriculture

By G. B. Masefield. Pp. viii+196. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1949.) 12s. 6d. net.

THE literature on tropical agriculture is widely scattered, and it is not easy for the newcomer to tropical agriculture to find answers to the innumerable questions that he inevitably asks; hence a compilation of a general nature, such as the present work, fulfils a definite need. The book commences with an introduction consisting of five chapters dealing with tropical soils and environment, soil conservation, implements and haulage, irrigation and some economic aspects. These rather diverse topics are compressed into twenty-four pages, and while providing a useful introduction, it tends to oversimplify the various problems involved.

The second part of the book deals with various tropical crops both major and minor. Again, the scope of the book allows only a brief account of each, but will no doubt be a useful source of reference to those suddenly confronted with the entirely new agriculture of the tropics. It would have added to

the value of the book, without appreciably increasing its length, if the natural orders to which the crop plants belong had been indicated.

Owing to the very different, and often specialized, agriculture of various tropical territories, very few agriculturists will have had the opportunity of acquiring first-hand information about all tropical crops, and a book of this nature (as the author admits) must depend to a certain extent on information from a variety of sources. It is not surprising, therefore, that minor errors of detail occur; for example, it is stated that one of the objects of cacao fermentation is to "develop the characteristic chemical compounds including theobromine which gives cocoa its stimulating property". Actually the reverse is the case—fermentation causes some of the theobromine already present in the bean to be released and lost in the sweatings.

Part 3 gives a general account of agricultural diseases and pests. Here the author is confronted with the difficult task of making a selection, since it is obvious that only the most important can be mentioned. It is difficult to understand, however, why the leaf-cutting ants (*Atta* spp.) of the American tropics are not included.

The concluding chapters are concerned with live-stock—cattle types, small stock, minor farm animals and pasture management. There are appendixes containing information useful to the practical agriculturist.

Books on tropical agriculture are few, and the present work provides a handy reference for the general agriculturist in the tropics and is especially useful as an introduction to tropical agriculture, although the author states that it is not written for the specialist. The author's clear and concise style has enabled him to compress a surprising amount of information into a small compass.

E. C. HUMPHRIES

OCEANIC BIRDS OF SOUTH AMERICA ⁸⁷⁷

Oceanic Birds of South America

A Study of Species of the Related Coasts and Seas, Including the American Quadrant of Antarctica based upon the Brewster-Lanford Collection in the American Museum of Natural History. By Robert Cushman Murphy. Vol. 1. Pp. xxii+640+44 plates. Vol. 2. Pp. vii+641+4245+44 plates. (New York: The Macmillan Company and the American Museum of Natural History. London: Macmillan and Co., 1948.) £4 7s. 6d. net.

A NEW edition of this remarkable work, first published in 1936, will be welcomed by bird-lovers not only in America but also in Great Britain. The birds described, although primarily sea birds of South America, are, many of them, great wanderers, and are found either habitually, or from time to time, in North Atlantic waters. For example, consider Wilson's petrel. These petrels, writes the author, in summer are to be seen in every bay and cove of Maine and Nova Scotia, although they are migrants from the other end of the world, whereas Leach's petrels, which nest on the shores of Maine and Nova Scotia, are rarely seen on the sea. The calling of Leach's petrels during the night in their burrows, and also in the air above them, is so strange and mysterious that "the mind may readily picture a