

An Anthropologist at Work

Writings of Ruth Benedict. By Margaret Mead. Pp. xxii+583+8 plates. (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, Ltd., 1959.) 42s.

RUTH BENEDICT and Margaret Mead are two of the best-known names in American anthropology, and certainly the best known to the general public, because their writings have a popular appeal and have appeared in cheap editions. This is a book by the second about the first, or rather it is a book about Ruth Benedict and her circle, among whom Margaret Mead was a prominent figure, as she is in the book. It contains a number of articles—and also poems—by Ruth Benedict interlarded with introductory pages by Margaret Mead. Some of the articles have already appeared in print elsewhere, and the unpublished ones contain so little of scientific interest that it scarcely seems worth while committing them to print; and, indeed, it must be said that much of Ruth Benedict's writing fell into the class of higher journalism rather than into that of scientific anthropology. It could, however, be said that it is often helpful in evaluating an anthropologist's writings to have some knowledge of him as a person and of his private interests. That would be true, but a brief memoir would have served the purpose better than a book of more than 500 pages and so constructed that the subject of the memoir is constantly interrupted by its editor and the editor by its subject. Moreover, even an English anthropologist, who might be expected to find an account of his American colleagues of interest, may find, as I have, the company somewhat dull. Those who are not anthropologists will, I fear, find it tedious, for what can be more tedious than the doings and views of persons we have scarcely heard of, and persons of no very great importance? An answer to that question might be, the revelation of their feuds and personal antipathies. Some of the gossip may be true and might be spoken, but it ought not to have been published in print so soon—for example, what is said about the late Prof. Radcliffe-Brown; for it is not as though relations between other persons mentioned are treated with complete candour. It is a pity that the initial sympathy and admiration which many of us have felt towards Ruth Benedict, an able woman who left some important writings behind her, and also towards the centre of the circle, Franz Boas, should in the course of reading this memorial volume be lost.

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

Nuclear Reactors for Power Generation

Edited by E. Openshaw Taylor. Pp. vii+144. (London: George Newnes, Ltd., 1958.) 21s. net.

THE basis of this book is a short course of lectures given at the Heriot-Watt College, Edinburgh. The first and the final chapters provide a reasonable survey of the application of nuclear power. The first of these chapters deals with the world energy requirement, and the importance of nuclear power to the United Kingdom, the United States, the U.S.S.R., and the remainder of Europe. The final chapter considers the economic application of nuclear power, dealing with the choice of steam cycle, fuel burn-up and the importance of a high load factor. In this latter context pumped storage schemes are discussed.

The five intermediate chapters provide a short technical survey aimed at providing engineers concerned with the construction and operation of nuclear

power plants with a background of information. The text is not intended for the designer. The chapter on materials is the exception, however, and is more detailed. Certainly the designer would find it a useful survey of the likely reactor materials. The potential reactor operator would probably advocate more space being allowed for safety and instrumentation, to enable the control systems of the current electricity authorities' nuclear power stations to be described in detail.

A considerable training programme for technicians and operators will be necessary as the large nuclear power stations begin to be commissioned from 1960 onwards. This book provides a summary of a typical course.

R. VAUX

Disposal of Radioactive Waste

By K. Saddington and W. L. Templeton. Pp. x+102+8 plates. (London: George Newnes, Ltd., 1958.) 17s. 6d. net.

THE disposal of radioactive waste material is a problem which had to be faced when the production of radioisotopes commenced on a large scale both in Great Britain and elsewhere. It will, of course, become of increasing importance as the atomic energy power programme expands and the use of radioactive material increases in industry and the medical fields.

The authors have provided a book which should do much to enlighten the general reader and, at the same time, act as a useful work of reference for those working in the field of atomic energy.

Although it is claimed that the book is designed to assist sanitary engineers, the main emphasis is on the wastes arising at reactor stations and fuel-processing establishments. A more detailed account of the problems arising in industry would have been an advantage.

The important biological aspects are described very fully, perhaps too fully, having in mind the class of reader for whom the book is intended. Certain of the other chapters could have been expanded to provide more guidance to those outside the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority.

It is quite impossible in a book of this size to give a comprehensive account of all the problems and their solutions. Nevertheless, the authors are to be congratulated on a good attempt to provide a general survey of the disposal of radioactive wastes.

Selections from Modern Abstract Algebra

By Richard V. Andree. Pp. xii+212. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1958.) 42s. net.

A BETTER title for this book might be "An Easy Introduction to some Ideas in Modern Abstract Algebra". It is often said that abstract algebra demands little manipulative technique but a considerable degree of mathematical maturity; the object of this book is to enable the novice to acquire that maturity, starting from little more than basic notions about integers and real and complex numbers. The early chapters discuss logical ideas and concepts such as equivalence classes and congruence in detail, with plenty of illustrations and exercises chosen over a wide field; explanations are full and generally careful, though the reader may be left in doubt on whether a postulate is or is not the same thing as an axiom (p. 11), and the description of a series as "convergent, perhaps finite" (p. 24) is unfortunate.

Boolean algebra receives adequate discussion, with examples from logical puzzles and circuit theory.