

REVIEWS

GENERAL

Notes and Queries on Anthropology. Revised and rewritten by a Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Sixth Edition. London (Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1951. Price £1 8s.

6 The new edition of *Notes and Queries* fulfils a long-felt need and will be welcomed by all anthropologists in the English-speaking world. Despite the great expansion of anthropological studies during the last 25 years this handbook and questionnaire, which was first issued by the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1874, has not been replaced by any comparable publication, and ever since the fifth edition went out of print there has been no guide to anthropological observation which could be obtained by students embarking on a first field trip or those who, without being professional anthropologists, have the opportunity of frequent and prolonged contacts with members of non-literate societies.

While the general scope of *Notes and Queries* has remained the same as in previous editions, the outlay and arrangement of the chapters have been considerably altered. Part I is still devoted to Physical Anthropology, and a brief chapter on Blood Groups has been added to the information on anthropometry. The comparative slenderness of Part I, which fills only 22 out of 368 pages of text, is justified in view of the highly technical character of anthropometric methods which virtually excludes the collection of useful data by amateurs.

Part II is entitled Social Anthropology and comprises sections on Methods, Social Structure, Social Life of the Individual, Political Organization, Economics, Ritual and Belief, Knowledge and Tradition, and Language. It is here that the new edition marks a most significant advance on all previous issues. Many of the more recent developments in social anthropology are reflected in the classification of concepts and the systematization of the methods of investigation. The chapters of this part contain concise and illuminating descriptions of the various factors and elements of social life as well as detailed guidance for the formulation of questions. Even the layman following the lines of enquiry here indicated should be able to gain a fairly good grasp of the society he is studying. The instruction provided for the use of the genealogical method will be found particularly useful, and many a student engaged in anthropological fieldwork would do well to check his material by running through the numerous questions suggested in these chapters.

While great skill has been used in packing vital information on numerous aspects of social life into the framework of Part II, there are some inconsistencies in the allocation of subjects between Part II and Part III, which bears the heading Material Culture. It is difficult to understand, for instance, why the section on Medicine and Surgery should have found a place in Part II, whereas Drama, as well as Games and Amusements, has been listed under Material Culture. Dramatic performances both spontaneous and traditional are undoubtedly an expression of social realities and their proper place would have been in Part II alongside the sections dealing with myths and stories.

Many of the chapters in Part III have been taken verbally from the fifth edition, and in most cases there was indeed no need for revision. This does not apply, however, to the chapter on Plant-Cultivation, which might well have been considerably amplified. An enumeration and brief description of the various methods of sowing and planting, for instance, would be at least as important as the catalogue of musical instruments, which in a later section of the same part fills no less than 12 pages. Agricultural methods are as a rule not well reported in anthropological monographs and it is in this field that even trained anthropologists might profit from a brief account of the relevant technical points. But the fifty-odd lines devoted to Plant-Cultivation are obviously quite insufficient to draw an observer's attention to such items as the methods of dibbling and broadcast sowing, the sprouting of paddy before sowing, preparation of nurseries, and the clipping of seedlings at transplanting time, or even to list the principal types of agricultural

implements. In a handbook containing such detailed instructions for other inquiries one would expect a reasonably full guide to the problems likely to arise in the study of agricultural methods and the processing of agricultural produce, and in this section there is scope for improvement in a future edition.

The brief part on Field Antiquities will serve its purpose if it impresses on social anthropologists the desirability of keeping their eyes open for archaeological remains and of collecting such surface finds as will arouse the interest of archaeologists.

The book list at the end of the book can necessarily not be more than a brief introduction to anthropological literature, and the choice of two or three dozen titles for every continent must obviously be largely arbitrary. Yet there are cases where a less important work of an author has been listed and a major work omitted. In the section on Asia, for instance, we find V. Elwin's *The Agaria* (1942), but not his *The Muria and their Ghotul* (1947), and W. V. Grigson's unobtainable and somewhat ephemeral Government report *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar* (1944) has been given preference over *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* (re-issued in 1949), the standard work on the Bastar tribes. The list of recommended periodicals has been greatly enlarged and contains now several journals not primarily devoted to anthropology. It is therefore all the more inexplicable why such journals of international importance as *L'Anthropologie* and *Anthropos*, which were included in the short list published in the fifth edition, have now been eliminated.

However, criticism of a few minor points should not detract from our appreciation of a most valuable handbook which will henceforth form an indispensable part of every field anthropologist's equipment. Indeed the members of the editorial committee, who have undertaken the laborious and anonymous task of revising and rewriting *Notes and Queries*, are to be congratulated on the general excellence of the new edition. C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

Note

The Hon. Editor of MAN will welcome critical discussion of this volume in the correspondence columns, with a view to improvements in the next edition.—ED.

The Physical Basis of Life. By J. D. Bernal. London (Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1951. Pp. 80. Price 6s.

7 This small book is essentially the Guthrie Lecture given to the Physical Society in 1947, together with answers to some criticisms of certain points made by other scientists. It deals mainly with the origin of life from inorganic matter rather than with an analysis of living matter, as the title might suggest. Professor Bernal does not attempt to define life, but discusses some properties common to all living matter. He deals first with the probable state of the earth's surface and atmosphere before life began and considers some of the ways in which complex compounds, with large molecules, might have been produced from this inorganic world. In particular, he suggests how proteins, essential constituents of protoplasm, could have been produced. He then deals with photosynthesis and the changes produced in the atmosphere by the presence of life, which made possible the utilization of oxygen for energy-production. He discusses briefly the complex nature of protoplasm and describes a theory of division of the nucleus based on the formation of fibrous protein molecules. He ends by considering the further development of cells into more complex organizations.

The whole treatment of a subject such as this must, of course, be highly speculative, but Professor Bernal, in developing his ideas, avoids all mysticism and bases his arguments on established data or on plausible conjectures, many of which could be checked by experimental methods. Although it is unlikely that all his guesses will be right, this book will remain, through its deep insight, brilliant speculation and clear exposition, a valuable contribution to the study of the origin of life. M. LUBRAN