

*Kinship and Social Organisation.* By Dr. W. H. R. Rivers. Pp. v+96. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1914.) Price 2s. 6d. net.

DR. RIVERS has made a speciality of the adaptation of the genealogical method to the interpretation of social facts, to which he has devoted much knowledge and hard thinking. In the present collection of lectures delivered at the London School of Economics he uses his special studies of social life in Melanesia to a consideration of the classificatory system, the essential feature of which is the application of its terms, not to single individual persons, but to classes of relatives which may often be very large. The discovery of this system was the work of Lewis Morgan, who, diverting his attention from the facts at his disposal, attempted to formulate a condition of general promiscuity developing into group marriage, a view offensive to his readers and certain to meet with active criticism. His first opponent was J. F. McLennan, who urged that the terms used formed merely a code of courtesies and forms of ceremonial address for social intercourse. Another theory, that of Prof. Kroeber, suggested that the use of these forms does not depend upon social causes, but that they were conditioned by causes purely linguistic and psychological.

Dr. Rivers, after a careful analysis of the facts, has little difficulty in disposing of these theories. He shows that the process of determination of the nomenclature of relationship by social conditions has been rigorous and exact; further, that every detail of these systems has been so determined. "Even so small and apparently insignificant a feature as the classing of the sister-in-law with the sister has been found to lead back to a definite social condition arising out of the regulation of marriage and of sexual relations." The lectures form a useful contribution to the study of the history of human marriage.

*The Farm Woodlot: a Handbook of Forestry for the Farmer and the Student in Agriculture.* By E. G. Cheyney and Prof. J. P. Wentling. Pp. xii+343. (New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1914.) Price 6s. 6d. net.

This is an excellent handbook of elementary forestry, specially adapted for the use of farmers and students of agriculture in North America, yet containing much that should be of interest to landowners in this country. There are well-written chapters on practical silviculture, on forest mensuration, protection and utilisation, on ornamental planting, and about the durability and preservation of timber. A special article deals with the economic position of the forest and the work of afforestation in the modern State. The authors discuss the question of the apportionment of the soil of a country into the two classes of agricultural and forest lands, on the only just basis; a comparison of the net revenues obtainable from the land under other crops, and under trees. Most of us, who regard the United States as producing timber only from her virgin forests, will

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learn with surprise that already in New England plantations of white pine have yielded six per cent. annually on the investment.

Another chapter is devoted to the history of the forests of Germany, the United States, and Canada. It is satisfactory to hear that although the progress of scientific forestry in Canada has been slow, and dotted with many set-backs, the prospect at present is promising. In the United States the Forest Service has long been at work, and is now carrying out on the extensive territory under its jurisdiction a magnificent programme, in which the question of profit is never forgotten, all its measures being governed by business principles, none of them by sentiment.

*Matriculation Mechanics.* By Dr. William Briggs and Prof. G. H. Bryan. Third edition. Pp. viii+363. (London: W. B. Clive, University Tutorial Press, Ltd., 1914.) Price 3s. 6d.

ADVANTAGE has been taken of the publication of a new edition of this well-known class book to add a collection of simple experiments to illustrate the fundamental principles of mechanics. This addition will certainly increase the usefulness of the book.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

##### Renunciation of Honorary Degrees.

I HAPPEN to see in one of the Dutch journals that a number of German men of science have divested themselves of honours bestowed upon them by British universities and learned societies, on account of the war between England and Germany.

Will you allow me to express the hope, by means of this letter, that my British friends will not reciprocate this action by a similar one?

To my mind, worse than the young lives sacrificed, worse than the destruction of ancient monuments of arts and science, is the almost inevitable consequence of this terrible war: the sowing of hatred and distrust between different nations.

Now it is my firm belief that it is the duty and the privilege of scientific men all the world over to do all in their power gradually to allay these feelings of hatred and distrust.

For this reason especially I regret greatly the action of the German "savants," and earnestly pray my British friends to abstain from similar action.

J. P. LOTSY.

Perpetual Secretary of the Dutch Society of Sciences, Haarlem, September 12.

##### The Green Flash.

As the green flash continues to appear in your columns, may I give some limiting observations. At sea I have always seen it, if the horizon is clear and not too red. It is also well seen over distant mountains in Egypt at rising, when the sky is less red than at setting. The horizon may be as near as two miles, and still show traces of a green edge. At any distance less than five miles the disappearance can be followed up for some seconds by walking up a slope, so as to keep the green edge under continuous observation.

W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE.