

by example, how much is still to be learned in the haunts of man along those Asiatic roads where others, though not very many Europeans, have passed before him.

Col. Schomberg's book is a record of two journeys of considerable duration, in 1927-29 and 1930-31, in Sinkiang, the modern province which comprises all the Chinese possessions in Central Asia and extends from the Gobi Desert to Asiatic Russia, its political and administrative centre being Urumchi. Starting from Kashgar he visited all the principal centres of population which lie around the central desert, some of them several times, and penetrated to outer Mongolia, crossing the Zungarian desert. In his second journey he went to Lop, and was able to observe the effects on the population of the recent diversion, after a thousand years, of the River Tarim to its ancient channel. The distress among the inhabitants caused by the change in the distribution of the water supply is an instructive comment on the history of civilisation in this land of dead cities.

Some of the districts visited by Col. Schomberg, such as Yulduz, Barkul, Sharasumé, are but little known; but in all there is a striking uniformity. Variations, indeed, are noted by the author; but they are mostly connected with food, the bazaar, and cleanliness. Col. Schomberg is a keen observer of differences of character, whether among the town-dwelling Sart or among the mountain nomads, Kirghiz, Kasak or Mongol; but he is tolerant of their peculiarities. His description of the Tungan, the Chinese Mahomedans, of whom too little is known, is welcome; while his high opinion of the Chinese administrator, notwithstanding the handicap of 'red-tape', is justified by his experience.

The attractive coloured illustrations are from photographs by Capt. George Sherriff.

*The Empty Quarter: being a Description of the Great South Desert of Arabia known as Rub' al Khali.* By H. St. J. B. Philby. Pp. xxiv+434+32 plates. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1933.) 21s. net.

MR. PHILBY'S achievement in crossing the Rub' al Khali, "The Empty Quarter" of southern Arabia, of which he tells the story in this volume, is sufficiently well known to call for little further comment. It was a project which had been a cherished ambition for fourteen years, and it was an ill turn of fortune that the honour of priority should have gone to Mr. Bertram Thomas by the narrowest of margins. Mr. Philby's chronicle of strenuous exploration makes fascinating reading and, apart from its scientific value, is of permanent interest as a record of what may well be the last exploration on any considerable scale in Arabia by camel train. The author foreshadows the advent of the motor car.

The scientific results of the journey were considerable. Although the archaeological material collected was scant, and the ruins which had been

reported did not turn out to be what had been expected, but vast craters said to be formed by the impact of meteorites, the geographical observations, and especially the evidence of a vanished river system, hold out hope for the prehistorian in the future. They suggest the possible discovery of material far earlier than the Neolithic implements obtained on this journey. The geological, zoological and botanical materials are discussed in appendixes written by experts in the respective branches of science concerned.

*Human Geography of the South: a Study in Regional Resources and Human Adequacy.* By Dr. Rupert B. Vance. (University of North Carolina Social Study Series.) Pp. xiv+596. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1932.) 24s. net.

THE area of which this book treats comprises the thirteen southern States of the United States of America, from Virginia and Kentucky to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Atlantic to Texas and Oklahoma. This may be regarded as a distinctive human and cultural region although it embraces several physical units of distinctive character. Dr. Vance traces the relation between man and his environment, keeping his study to broad issues with a commendable absence of mere details of location and localised activity. He shows how the different phases in the peopling of his area still have their reflections in conditions to-day. The heritage of the frontier zone is submerged but not lost in the later plantation phase, while superimposed on these are newer industrial and agricultural interests.

The book is well documented and contains an exhaustive bibliography. It is a good example of the value of advanced geographical study in the understanding of human problems.

Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra. *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia.* No. 25, 1932. Prepared by E. T. McPhee. Pp. xxxii+894. (Canberra: L. F. Johnston, Commonwealth Government Printer, 1933.) 5s.

As a work of reference in regard to all aspects of Australian activity, this annual work is invaluable, and the present issue retains the qualities that have made the Commonwealth "Year Book" a pattern of what such reference volumes should be.

Descriptive notes frequently amplify the full statistical tables, which in many cases give for purpose of comparison the figures for several years, and in some aspects of Australian life comparative figures for other countries. The call for economy has curtailed some sections, but the editor has been successful in giving an immense mass of information and leaving no obvious blanks in his compilation. Several maps, including one of rainfall, add to the value of the work, and there is the usual list of books on Australia.