

Reviews

THE REGIONAL BALANCE OF RACIAL EVOLUTION being the Presidential Address of Professor H. J. FLEURE, D.S.C., delivered to Section H of the British Association at the Oxford meeting, August 1926.

Presidential addresses are immune from criticism on the occasion of their delivery. How long this immunity lasts we do not know, but let it be said at once that Professor Fleure's address has an innate immunity. It is a brilliant attempt to outline an evolutionary rather than a taxonomic survey of the races of Man ; it abounds with stimulating suggestions ; and it reveals the author as one of those rare men whose power of generalization is not atrophied by specialism. Great generalizers are not uncommon, and all men of science are specialists ; but too often the one is ignorant of his facts while the other can see nothing else. Professor Fleure can see both the wood and the trees at the same time.

The address is written in clear, terse English and a summary is impossible, for it is itself a summary. Perhaps a few quotations may give the best idea of it. For instance, 'Human society does not so much result from the coming together of individuals as human individuality results from the liberation, bit by bit, of individual initiative within groups.'

Professor Fleure refers to the suggestion of Professor Menghin that the Grimaldi type (late palaeolithic) of man 'is to be linked with the rock-face art of Alpera and other places in East and South-east Spain.' An African origin has been suggested for both, and there are very good reasons for accepting this explanation, first put forward many years ago by Professor Sollas (*Ancient Hunters*), for the paintings bear an extraordinary resemblance to the Bushmen paintings of South Africa, while there are negroid characters in the Grimaldi skeletons. Further, rock paintings occur throughout the North of Africa (in the Sahara at Ouenat and in the Sudan at Gebel Moya and Gebel Sagadi, for instance) and some of these may well be of extreme antiquity. 'At that (pleistocene) period, we may take it that the requisite climatic conditions obtained in various parts of the belt now forming the Sahara and South-west Asia, for the belts of climate then lay further south, and the winter westerlies apparently visited that belt ; it is interesting that the Sahara shows a good deal of evidence of inhabitants of possibly mid-pleistocene date. We may, perhaps, venture to place the ancestors of modern man in the zone from the Atlantic edge of the Sahara to Persia.'

With regard to the question of later survivals of the Cro-Magnon type, it may be mentioned here that in the Zaghreb (Agram) Museum is a fine series of apparently neolithic skulls with what the present writer thought, when he saw them, to be Cro-Magnon affinities. They have never been published.

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Professor Fleure suggests that 'the probable early home of grain was in some part of the Fertile Crescent around the north end of the Arabian desert, and food production was already undertaken there, e.g. at Susa, about or before 5000 B.C.' Somewhere in the same region is to be placed the rise of a culture complex, which included the invention of metallurgy. Some elements of this culture may have spread to Western Europe during the fourth millennium; but 'there is . . . no need to picture the awakening West as copying exactly from one and distant civilizations. One will be nearer the truth if one thinks of the incoming of a germinating influence.' This is an admirable expression of opinions founded upon fact, not fancy. The key to European prehistory is to be found in local evolution of culture, occasionally modified by influences coming from without.

LEGENDS OF THE FENLAND PEOPLE. By CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE. Cecil Palmer. 7s. 6d.

Archaeologists and historians are no longer sceptical of the value of folk-lore as ancillary to their studies. Genuine folk tradition, analysed with critical care, may contain and reveal valuable kernels of truth, and the garnering of such material in Britain is an urgent need. The book here reviewed can, however, hardly be regarded as providing anything of value in this respect. Practically no details of the sources whence the stories are derived are given save in the case of those numbered 7 and 8—Sir Hugh and the Dragon, and the Story of Bricstan of Chatteris. For the basis of these the author expresses his indebtedness to the author of a book on Horncastle folk-lore. The word "basis" gives us the clue; the stories are literary renderings of folk tales added to or modified as art dictates; and their interest lies therefore mainly in their literary quality. On the merit of the book from this point of view the present reviewer offers no opinion. Those who are curious in such matters may compare chapter v, "Hereward the Saxon," with parallel passages in Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake*. It may be noted that in the foreword the author refers the transformation of a well-populated country into what is now the Fenland to a "sea-quake" which occurred during the consulship of Valentinian. There is no index. CYRIL FOX.

IMMORTAL MAN. By C. E. VULLIAMY. Methuen & Co. 6s.

The subject of this book is the belief in the Immortality of Man. The author traces that belief in the evidence afforded by prehistoric burials, and examines our own attitude towards the problem of survival. He expressly states that he has no wish to present any theory of his own.

The book contains a compendious account of burial customs; the author ranges widely, gathering in archaeological and ethnological evidence, and the material thus collected, if well indexed, would prove useful to archaeologists in search of parallels to the varied and curious phenomena of burial which, if they be barrow diggers, they are certain to have found. The index is however entirely inadequate. Why so many authors of serious works are content to allow this important part of their book to be neglected is a mystery. The answer in the present case, doubtless, is that the book is meant for the general reader. The style of the writing is exact and lucid, the attitude of mind detached and at times ironic. CYRIL FOX.