BOOK REVIEWS

be read by all who practise complement-fixation, for whom it is primarily written, but the clinician will find much to interest and instruct.

T. E. O.

SEX AND ITS MYSTERIES. By George Ryley Scott, F.R.A.I., F.Ph.S., F.P.C.(Lond.), F.Z.S. Cr. 8vo. Pp. iv + 198. Price 10s. 6d. net. London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, Ltd., 1929.

IT is said, in the very complete account of this little book, so agreeably furnished to the "indolent reviewer" by the thoughtful publishers, that it is a most valuable contribution to the literature of sex. The author, we are told, treats "exhaustively" every phase, and discusses "scientifically, effectively and enlightenedly," every one of the problems of "sexual physiology." "Infinite skill, courage and distinction" are displayed, and "here lies the uniqueness of the book." It is the work of one of the "most daring and advanced writers of the age"—a "writer of brilliance and distinction" who brings an "encyclopædic knowledge of sexual physiology and psychology" to his task, and who has not only "exploded a farrago of popular fallacies and myths" but has "divulged the whole truth about sex." Nay, more, he has "faced squarely" the "facts in all their starkness"; he has handled them "without gloves." It is impossible, we learn, to indicate with pretence to completeness "the tremendous scope and variety of the book's contents," but "resolutely, skilfully, entertainingly, logically, pitilessly it draws aside the curtains that wholly or partially conceal the mysteries of sex." Beliefs are "ruthlessly demolished," and disturbing facts "hitherto unknown to the lay public are unburied and explained." All this, too, for eleven shillings, post free, within the compass of one hundred and ninety-eight small pages!

In face of such stupendous qualities a reviewer, at all times conscious of his responsibility, must feel himself deplorably inadequate to the occasion. He can only draw attention to the characteristics of the work, as proclaimed by the publishers, and thereafter content himself with noting some of the features that have given interest to the task of perusal.

In the first place, we should note that the author, "at the risk of being dubbed old-fashioned," asserts that the success, in recent times, of what he calls the wide and universal conspiracy to keep the young of both sexes in ignorance of sexual matters as long as possible, "was all to the good." Rob the sexual act and woman of their mystery, reduce woman and the sexual act to the level of physiological entities (he maintains), and "you destroy at the same time the only distinction between the intercourse of two lovers and that of the *roué* and the prostitute." So much being made clear he announces, two or three pages further on, that he is attempting to "pull wholly aside the curtains that still partially conceal" the mystery of sex and woman.

This he proceeds to do, with infinite gusto. There is no doubt about the unusual quality of the writing: the nice derangement of epitaphs leaves Mrs. Malaprop gasping from the word "go." Hypotheses are "smashed to splinters," and "old theories" to "fragments"; while the "gates of wrath" would be "with a vengeance let loose" upon medical men who would suggest coitus apart from marriage, in

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"certain abnormal cases connected with celibate women" in whom the "benefits of coitus are indicated" owing to "amenorrhœa, physiologically induced." Mr. Scott is equally uncompromising when he deals with modern psychology. In the only paragraph specifically dealing with the views of modern psychologists on sexual problems that we have noticed, he tells us that "when Freud talks of thumb-sucking in infants as a manifestation of sex-feeling he verges on talking bosh." So much for Freud!

It is perhaps a little unfortunate that the author relies so frequently upon authoritative statement and so seldom gives precise references: otherwise, we should have been glad to learn more concerning the travels of Montaigne, in Italy, in 1850, and the remarkable adventures in brothels of a lady named Soranus "if the statement of Marcus Antonius is anything to go by." The extent of Mr. Scott's medical reading is illustrated by his allusions to *kraurosis vulva*, to a peculiarly virile form of the *Treponema pallidum* and to the poem by "Frascatorius," in which the name syphilis was first given to venereal disease. We are, we confess, a little puzzled by the suggestion that "deficiency in pituitary secretion may create a second Dr. Crippen or a Gilles de Rais." Perhaps Neil Cream was intended, though, even so, the hypopituitary attribution seems to need reinforcement. However, in face of what the publishers tell us, we must not quibble and can only rejoice at the fair-mindedness shown when we are told, in a certain connection, that "the League of Nations Report, amidst a farrago of oleaginous balderdash, makes *one* sensible statement." In fine, we have thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, and we are sure that any medical man who is acquainted with the literature of the subject will agree with the publishers' estimate of its "uniqueness" and entertaining character. It is indeed, as they say, a *tour de force*.

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