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AFRICAN RACES

(African Races (Pygmies, Bantu, Equatorial Hybrid Tribes, Nilotics, Nilo-Hamitics, Fulani, Khoisan). Compiled and the plan organized by Herbert Spencer by E. TORDAY. Part 2-4 of the work: Descriptive Sociology or Groups Facts, Classified by Herbert Spencer), 1931 385 pp. Folio, one Ursula Torday. Five guineas. Williams & Norgate, London)

WESTERMANN, Diedrich

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When Herbert Spencer, after a loss of over £3,000, suspended the publication of the volumes of his *Descriptive Sociology*, he did so under financial stress, but provided in his will that the series should be continued after his death. His executors, realizing that the volume dealing with Africa published on the eve of the opening up of the Dark Continent, was absolutely out of date, decided that a completely new edition of this work became an absolute necessity and entrusted Mr. Torday with its compilation. It is this work which now lies before us, a unique publication, which will be hardly have its equal in any other branch of anthropology. The book gives, in a carefully designed order, abstracts from practically all the important and reliable sources, from the sixteenth century to the present day, on African peoples, excepting the Hamites in North Africa and the north-eastern borderlands In the Introduction Mr. Torday gives his views on African races and their composition. He believes in the identity of the forest pygmies with their taller neighbours, i.e. the Negroes. 'In the present of knowledge we may assume that their stunted growth is due to some not yet established action of their environment on the pituitary gland.' He even seems to think that there are two distinct types of Pygmies, thick-set, long-bodied, short-legged, coarse-featured groups in the Ubangi region, and west and south of these, lithe, relatively long-

legged little men with the more refined physiognomy characteristic of the Bantu, these two thus representing the prototypes of the Sudanic and Bantu tribes. But, as the author himself says: ' We can never overrate our ignorance '.

The introduction is followed by an ingenious survey in tabular form, in which the outstanding features of each group are recorded in the form of catchwords; they are necessarily often somewhat general, but will notwithstanding be of service for acquiring a knowledge at first glance. The main value of the volume lies in the abstracts, which comprise some 385 pages in folio, with occasional critical notes by the author. The scientific selection and compilation of such an enormous amount of material could only be done by a man who has not only a perfect mastery of the literature, a deep insight into the problems of African anthropology, a first-hand knowledge of the African, and an untiring assiduity, but who, through long personal contact with African natives in Africa, has learnt to appreciate the values and possibilities to be found in African races.

The Descriptive Sociology was destined for the student at home, to put the his material ready before him and thus to give him more time for constructive thinking. But here Mr. Torday went his own way. We know that while doing his work he was thinking but rarely of Spencer, and that he had quite another person in his mind. We have his confession in the preface: 'When the compiler was spending his younger and most treasured years in research of little-known African peoples he felt keenly the disadvantage he suffered through lack of books; he realized what opportunities he missed through ignorance of the work done by better men in other parts of Africa'. Matters have since greatly improved. 'Still, the best fieldwork must call the investigator to places off the track of easy communication if he wants to record the institutions surviving the onslaughts of civilization, industrialization, and the consequent destruction of tribal life. It is for those fieldworkers who go beyond the reach of libraries that the compiler has tried to condense into one volume the essence of African literature '.

It is obvious that besides the fieldworker the politician and administrator have been carefully kept in mind. If anthropology wants to be supported it must justify itself by helping those who are expected to provide for research. Such questions as marriage, kinship, land

tenure, law, are given full attention, and so are the various aspects of daily life. The chapter which has most room allotted to it is religion.

The shape of the book and its size will be criticized. It is bulky, heavy, and not at all easy to handle except when lying quite by itself on a spacious table. But here again the man in the field has to be kept in mind. It may be easier for him to place one volume at the bottom of his truck than a number of small books; for in fact Mr. Torday's volume replaces a library. I have no doubt that the worker at home will also greatly appreciate this volume, which is a treasure house of knowledge and will soon be almost indispensable for any one working in African anthropology.