

BOOKS

ROGUE QUEEN

by L. Sprague de Camp
Doubleday & Co., New York \$2.75

Reviewed by John S. Campbell
Instructor in Engineering Drafting

ROGUE QUEEN, the latest work from the prolific pen of L. Sprague de Camp '30, is a light and charming fantasy with a faintly discernible moral, which describes the effect of an expedition from Earth upon the inhabitants of another world. These people, the Avtini, have developed a beehive society of female workers and drones which is quite uncomplicated by sex, until the advent of the Earthmen.

What happens then is told in tongue-in-cheek fashion, mostly from the Avtini viewpoint. The terrestrial influence is at first mainly psycho-logical, but presently the hormones are involved too, and then the situa-

tion gets completely out of hand. Both Earthmen and bee people go through a series of chase adventures somewhat like those in the late Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars stories, but without the color of Burroughs' rough and tumble planet; in fact, de Camp's tale is a sort of pastel-shaded version of the Martian horse operas.

There is one point which should be corrected: *Rogue Queen* is described on the jacket as science fiction. This it definitely is not. *Rogue Queen* is a delightful bit of fantasy, but between fantasy and science fiction there is, or should be, a wide gap. In science fiction a plausible "scientific" idea is developed, and the story is centered about the struggle of the characters with the logical consequences of the idea. In fantasy, on the other hand, the fantastic situation serves merely as a background for the development of a normal human

problem. The problem may be presented in disguised form, as it is in *Rogue Queen*, but it is nevertheless reducible to a familiar form—in this case to the age-old struggle between convention and instinct. The Avtini may be most unearthly in appearance and customs, but their troubles turn out, in the end, to be very human.

Rogue Queen is not science fiction, but it is a nicely written bit of fantasy with a slightly racy flavor and a moral at the end, if one looks for it.

A CONCISE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY

by Peter Doig, F.R.A.S.
The Philosophical Library, Inc.,
New York \$4.75

Reviewed by Edison Pettit
Staff Member,
Mount Wilson Observatory

THIS BOOK fills a long-standing need for a brief survey of the history of an old science. The first chapter, called "The Oldest Astronomy," is highly speculative and cannot be called history. The succeeding three chapters, divided according to geographical origin ("China," "Egypt," etc.) cover the well-known ancient and medieval history of the subject in a commendable manner. Chapters V to XI cover the early modern astronomers by name, from Copernicus through William Herschel and Schröter, and bring the subject matter up to the year 1800. Personnel covered here are reminiscent of the catalogue of lunar formations.

The form then changes into classification by century, and this form is retained with the subclassification according to subject throughout the rest of the book—e.g., *Nineteenth Century: Second Half*, "Mercury," "Mars," etc., and such operational titles as "Star Catalogues," "Stellar Radial Velocities," "Stellar Parallaxes," "Rotation of the Galaxy," "External Universes," etc., in *The Twentieth Century*. A reference list and index complete the book.

The large type makes easy reading and the subject matter is the end result of extensive reading by the author. However, it is axiomatic that the local associations and special interests of the author are reflected

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in the accuracy and detail of the subject matter reported upon.

The treatment of planetary astronomy leaves little to be desired, but in solar astronomy some passages could be improved. The classification of prominences remains where Lockyer and Young left it in the 1880's. This passage is a prize: "Eruptive prominences appear only in the belts of the sun where spots are found, and are usually connected with spots, or rather with disturbed areas surrounding spots. Generally they are not very large, but they may, however, attain enormous heights. One observed on June 4, 1946—."

It could be pointed out that this was the largest prominence of any kind ever photographed either on the disk or against the sky. It was not associated with a spot or "in the belts of the sun where spots are found." And, as a matter of record, only a few eruptives were associated with spots.

Probably the most important piece of observational evidence about prominences obtained in recent years was the discovery that some types form in coronal space and rain down upon the sun, indicating that chromospheric matter in considerable extent pervades the corona, but this entirely escaped the author.

ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

by Charles Darwin
Philosophical Library, N. Y. \$3.75

THIS HANDSOME, pocket-sized book is a reprint of the original edition of Darwin's great work. This edition has never been reprinted before, and most of the people who have read Darwin have read him in one of the later (there were six in all) and longer, revised editions. This, then, is Darwin's book as he first presented it to the world, "unspoiled by later hesitation," says C. D. Darlington, F.R.S., in his introduc-

tion, "unimpaired by yielding to the trivial and captious critic . . . the bare body of (Darwin's) argument with its strength and its weakness unconcealed."

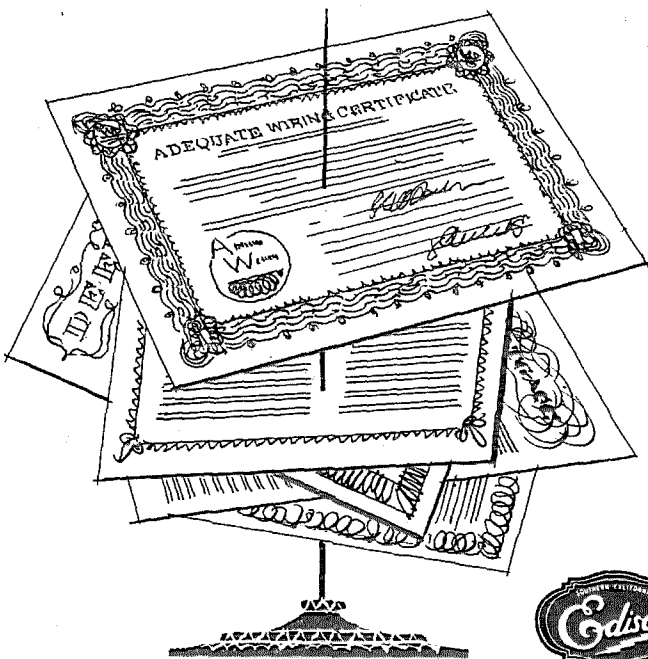
LOS ANGELES: A Guide to the City and its Environs

Hastings House, N. Y. \$4.50

This guidebook was originally published in 1941 as one of the series of American Guides compiled by workers of the WPA writers' program. The guides were one WPA project which successfully withstood all criticism. They were the best guidebooks going.

In recent years Hastings House has begun to update a number of the WPA Guides, and this 1951 edition of the Los Angeles one (which covers not only the city but the nearby beach and mountain resorts from Malibu to Palm Springs) is still the best guidebook to the area—and good reading besides.

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