

BOOK REVIEW

HUBERT TRIMMEL: *Höhlenkunde (Speleology)*. Pp. viii and 300, 88 illus. (Viehweg & Sohn, Braunschweig, 1968. D.M. 36.90).

This is a comprehensive treatment of modern speleology written in the tradition of Kyrle's classic "Theoretische Speläologie" (1923). As the last 20 years have brought considerable advances in the cave sciences the need for a compact treatment of speleology to include widely scattered but important small publications has been widely felt. While the present volume certainly fills this gap it is also meant as a general introduction to those concerned with other branches of the earth sciences. Moreover it will help to gain general recognition for speleology as a science. Even in the more complicated chapters his language is simple and his clear definitions will be a great help to anyone concerned with the terminology in the cave sciences.

One third of the volume is given to cave morphology and development. Cause and effect are clearly indicated, but, since the lack of space does not permit a detailed treatment of the more complex problems, the very specialized reader is referred to the sources given in the appendix.

The chapter on biospeleology gives similar emphasis to the understanding of the characteristics of underground life rather than a complete list of the forms of life. This is followed by a summary of anthropospeleology which is probably the most popularized of the cave sciences. Caves as places of worship and objects of myths are also included under this heading.

One branch of cave science that has attracted great attention in Austria is applied speleology. Correspondingly the treatment of this topic is rather extensive and gives a number of examples which should interest the British reader. The various ways in which caves have been and can be used is discussed in some detail; cave sediments—organic and inorganic—have been put to commercial use and have still a vogue and the economic gains from show caves in some areas are mentioned.

Historical speleology, following the continental tradition, is treated at some length; this finishes with a survey of modern documentation, giving details of international meetings, national organisations and institutes and a survey of the most important publications. There is a chapter on technical aspects of caving; this gives short outlines of the difficulties encountered and the methods used in dealing with them. The author finishes his work by a summary on regional speleology. This remains of necessity fragmentary, but it is a beginning that may encourage the development of a world-wide survey.

The volume admirably fulfills the purpose for which it was written:— to give an outline of scientific speleology. It is well written and illustrated and will be an excellent handbook for years to come. As the number of cavers in England who can follow the original German text is few, a translation may be desirable. It is a pity that there is no detailed treatment of cave hydrology.

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