BOOKS REVIEWED

The Natives of British Central Africa. By A. Werner.
(London: Archibald Constable, 1906.)

MISS WERNER will have added to her already considerable reputation as a student and interpreter of Africa by this work under review. The publishers were well advised to entrust to her treatment the native races of this section of the British Empire. The authoress has spent some years of her life to good purpose in South-Central Africa. She is already coming to the front as an authority on the Bantu languages, and the extent to which she has studied this subject is evidenced in this book, which is well worthy of becoming the leading authority on the peoples of Nyasaland for a good many years to come.

The book is admirably produced, the 32 full-page photographs being excellent, alike in their appositeness, their freedom from re-touching, and their clearness of printing. For this, the publishers deserve to share in the praise awarded to the author. The book is well indexed, and the geographical distribution of peoples is sufficiently illustrated by a sketch map.

I have mentioned Nyasaland as being the region chiefly illustrated in this ethnological work, though Miss Werner's treatment extends outside the limits of the Nyasaland Protectorate towards Tanganyika and the frontiers of the Congo Free State and to Portuguese East Africa. But in the main her information applies to the Yao, Anguru, Anyanja, Angoni-Zulu, Atonga, Batumbuka, and Awankonde tribes of the Nyasaland Protectorate.

The geographical title of British Central Africa was officially correct when the book was published. Originally that term was applied by the writer of this review to the somewhat vast and indefinite region taken under British protection in 1889-1890, a region which, so far as treaty claims and a hoisting of the flag went, extended to the north end of Tanganyika, and covered a small portion of what is now the Congo Free State, besides reaching—as it does now—to the confines of Angola. At that period the term "British Central Africa" was a very appropriate name for the great sphere of influence north of the Zambesi, as it lay in Central Africa, neither impinging on the west, the east, nor the

south, and having all its affinities of human race and language, of fauna and flora with the regions of Central Africa (as Miss Werner's book shows) rather than with the extremities. Subsequently this sphere was divided into the Protectorate over Nyasaland and the two provinces of North-West and North-East Rhodesia. Geographically, however, the general term of "British Central Africa" is still the best designation to cover the entire sphere of British dominion between the Zambesi on the south and the Congo Free State on the north.

Miss Werner opens with an excellent introductory sketch of the geographical features of Nyasaland, with a glimpse of its remarkable Central African fauna and flora. Then follows a chapter dealing in a summarised form with the tribal and racial divisions and chief characteristics of the people, not of Nyasaland only, but of much of British Central Africa. One interesting illustration in this chapter is a type of the apposite photographs that illustrate this book. It shows the different fashions in tooth-chipping or mutilation characteristic of the leading races in this part of Africa. Then follows a chapter on religion and magic, full of accurate, and in some cases novel, information. Miss Werner's remarkable knowledge of native languages—acquired after several years' residence—enables her throughout the book to give the native names or phrases for everything concerned in her treatise. Then there is a chapter on the episodes and vicissitudes of native life. This deals with the native from the hour of his birth to the day of his death. Translations of some of the native names bestowed on children are given, displaying in some cases the inherent poetry of these supposed savage natures. The whole of this chapter displays remarkable insight into and keen sympathy with the Negro character. Funeral rites, arts, industries, languages, folk-stories, tribal organisations, history are all adequately treated in a book which, whilst being quite scientific and (so far as the reviewer can judge) quite accurate, is written in a charming style—lucid, picturesque, and touched here and there with a pleasant humour. This book deserves to occupy an exceptional place in the literature of Africa and of Anthropology.

H. H. JOHNSTON.

From the Niger to the Nile. By Lieutenant Boyd Alexander, Rifle Brigade. 2 vols. 8vo; pp. 358, 395. (London: Edward Arnold.)

LIEUTENANT ALEXANDER'S book is one of the most readable books of travel we have come across for some time, which says