

Conifers.

Conifers and their Characteristics. By Charles Coltman-Rogers. Pp. xiii+333. (London: John Murray, 1920.) Price 21s. net.

CONIFERS, like ferns, stove-plants, orchids, alpines, and the ignoble carpet-bedding, have had their high tide of popularity. The fashion for them owed its origin chiefly to the work of the collectors Jeffrey and William Lobb in western North America in the middle of last century, and to that of John Gould Veitch in Japan in the early "sixties." From these areas, especially the former, our gardens have obtained their noblest conifers. We are told that, from fifty to seventy years ago, so keen was the desire to plant them that many beautiful flowering trees were destroyed to provide the necessary space, and that gardens in general lost much of their brightness and seasonal charm by the displacement of deciduous trees in favour of the heavier, gloomy, unchanging conifers. Inevitably, the craze came to an end, for a good proportion of them were found to need particular conditions which many localities where they were planted did not provide; and there is no more distressing object in the garden than a sickly conifer. In course of time the pendulum swung so much in the opposite direction that conifers in recent years have been over-much neglected.

To one who contemplates a serious and exhaustive study of the group, Mr. Coltman-Rogers's book cannot be regarded as anything more than a *hors d'œuvre*; but it is admirably adapted to stimulate a budding interest in these trees, and that probably was the author's chief aim. For this reason it would be scarcely fair to grumble at its shortcomings from the scientific point of view. At times Mr. Coltman-Rogers is apt to be discursive, not to say garrulous, but, on the whole, his gossip is pleasant and humorous, and his book will find many readers who would be repelled by a more technical work. It certainly contains much solid information, and the careful reader will find many curious and interesting peculiarities of the species pointed out which, unaided, he might very easily overlook. No detailed descriptions are given, but the last forty pages are devoted to a series of tables which contain a great deal of accurate information in condensed form; these will be a useful help in identifying species, and especially in differentiating those which are closely allied.

The book suffers from careless proof-reading, and the reader is apt to be irritated by the number of errors, trifling though they may be. On p. 97, for instance, the Douglas fir is said to

have been discovered by Menzies in 1792 and introduced in 1828; and then overleaf the respective dates are given as 1791 and 1827. It was not necessary to repeat the information, but at least the two accounts should tally. Kaempferi is spelt "Kaempferi," which jars one with whom the golden larch is a favourite tree. The invariable use of capitals as the initial letter for specific names is contrary to accepted practice, but perhaps the author has his private reasons for this.

On the whole, the book is pleasant and instructive, admirably printed, and light to handle, and may be recommended to those who contemplate the planting or study of one of the noblest and most interesting groups of the world's trees.

Physiology for Students and Practitioners.

A Text-book of Physiology: For Students and Practitioners of Medicine. By Prof. Russell Burton-Opitz. Pp. 1185. (Philadelphia and London: W. B. Saunders Co., 1920.) Price 32s. 6d. net.

TO add to the already numerous text-books on physiology is presumably to have the conviction that one is supplying what is lacking in those already in existence. The striking thing about Prof. Burton-Opitz's "Physiology" is that its author makes no such claim. In the first edition of a new book a claim for being really up-to-date would perhaps have been its best for recognition at a time when even some of the better-known books are somewhat delinquent in this respect.

If the author aspires to anything, it is to brevity, although his book has some 1140 pages of text. His object has apparently been to collect all the classic facts and theories and put them into new words. In this he has succeeded admirably, and his book, on the whole, compares well with its rivals. On controversial subjects he states fairly the different aspects of the case, and no pains have been spared in collecting facts and ideas for which free acknowledgment is made of the obvious debt to other text-books. The book reviews the whole subject in the most comprehensive manner. The greatest zeal for the explanation of phenomena is shown; indeed, to the physiologist there is just a suspicion of unnecessary explanation; but, on the other hand, the giving of elementary facts renders the book all the more readable by students commencing the study of the subject or by practitioners who have forgotten such matters. Students, however, using the book in preparation for examination should be warned that principles are more important than data. The giving of references at