

studies, and post-graduation courses, has an outstanding value. There is also a list of centres of research outside the university institutions; and, in both these connexions, there is information concerning inter-university scholarships, grants for research, etc.

The 1928 edition of the "Yearbook" maintains the high standard of its predecessor (which we noticed in these columns a year ago): it would not be easy to pay it a higher compliment.

*Plants of the Past: a Popular Account of Fossil Plants.* By Dr. Frank Hall Knowlton. Pp. xix + 275. (Princeton: Princeton University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1927.) 16s. net.

THIS book is written for readers with no special knowledge of either botany or geology, but is intended to arouse interest as well as to impart a fair amount of information. It should be successful, for it has many good points, and in any case it covers a field which no other book attempts to cover.

The first chapters are introductory; most of the remainder of the book describes the floras of the different formations from the Cambro-Silurian to the Pleistocene, one chapter being devoted to each formation. The result is that while the treatment is proportionate from a geological point of view, chapters which lack important material are loaded with detail. The British reader will find the chapters on the Tertiary especially troublesome, because they are full of the names of many unfamiliar American plants. The book ends with chapters on evolution, on the influence of man on plants, and on the formation of coal.

The author deals with a wide subject proportionately, accepts his data cautiously, and writes clearly. The general reader will find the book easy to follow, though sometimes dull. Students, on the other hand, are likely to be somewhat disappointed, because the author, in endeavouring to be simple, misses much of the interesting speculation on the evolution of plant structure, and on the changes of past climates, their place being taken by straightforward description.

*The Collection and Preparation of Herbarium and Timber Specimens.* By J. Burt Davy and L. Chalk. Pp. 28. (Oxford: The Imperial Forestry Institute, 1927.)

THIS handbook is intended primarily for the use of forest officers, and should prove of value to those district forest officers and their subordinates who can give the time, amidst their multifarious duties, to the collection of specimens for local forest herbaria.

Some forest officers, as the past has shown, have neither the gift nor the temperament of the collector; but for those possessing these attributes, the preparation of this handbook should prove of great service. Not only are the lines upon which the collection of individual specimens clearly laid down, but also the inadequate resources which face the forest officer whilst on tour in the forests are borne in mind. For example, under "Drying the

Specimens," after detailing the methods of placing the material in the press, the practical suggestion is made: "In very humid localities or during rainy weather, the press may be suspended endwise over a small camp fire or a portable paraffin stove, surrounded by an improvised tent of branches, grass, etc., with a hole at the top. The hot air penetrates the bundle by way of the corrugated cardboard."

The handbook may be recommended to all those who wish to collect botanical specimens which shall be serviceable for the herbarium, whilst at the same time ensuring that the results of the arduous work often entailed shall not be lost owing to subsequent bad packing and consequent irremediable damage during transit.

*The Locomotive-God.* By W. E. Leonard. Pp. v + 434. (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1928.) 18s. net.

THIS is not a cheerful book, but it will be read with zest by psychologists. The author, a man of literary and academic distinction in America, in early middle life became the victim of distressing and disabling, yet quite groundless, terrors. He could not walk more than a few hundred paces from home without panic; and he suffered besides from attacks of acute melancholia. Believing that the causes must somehow be infantile, he resolved to reach them. "I knew indeed there was something down below. What was it? I estimate by careful computation that my efforts to answer this question have been, up to date, equivalent to four semesters of laboratory research."

University colleagues assisted Mr. Leonard, and in the end it appeared that the first trauma had been caused by a shock received at the age of two years and four months when, straying near the metals, he had nearly been caught by a locomotive (hence the title of the book). Other distressing experiences, one in particular at the age of ten, were also unearthed, and the whole record takes the form of an autobiography, the details of which had in some cases long passed out of conscious memory. The book is far more personal than the mere medical record of a distressing case of distance-phobia, and is therefore more widely interesting. It is pervaded by a spirit of indomitable stoicism, for the suffering endured has been incredible. On this account, if for no other, the book makes invigorating reading. J. C. H.

*Elektrostatistische Versuche mit Anwendung des Universal-Elektroskops.* Von Theodor Wolff. Pp. viii + 85. (Berlin und Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag, 1928.) 2.85 gold marks.

In this volume the author describes his universal electroscope, and gives descriptions of numerous experiments, ranging from elementary experiments in electrostatics to measurements of ionisation currents of various types, and of atmospheric potentials. The experiments described are ingenious and well thought out, and teachers wishing to arrange a course of practical instruction in electrostatics will find some useful hints.