

Radioisotopes in Scientific Research

Proceedings of the International Conference held in Paris in September 1957, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Edited by Prof. R. C. Extermann. Vol. 1: Research with Radioisotopes in Physics and Industry. Pp. xxi+761. Vol. 2: Research with Radioisotopes in Chemistry and Geology. Pp. xxi+741. (London and New York: Pergamon Press, 1958.) 140s. net each volume.

THE Unesco Conference on "Radioisotopes in Scientific Research" has been reported in *Nature*, 180, 1029 (1957). The proceedings, which have now been published, comprise the contributions in their original language, but the abstracts of each paper are given in English, French, Russian and Spanish. The discussions are reported for each paper, and, although greatly reduced in volume, are well edited. Contrary to general belief that such research outdates itself in a reasonably short time, one has to admit that some of the material presented will be extremely useful to workers in this field for many years to come. For example, the work reported on the tracing of water by using cosmic-ray and man-made tritium, by Begemann and Libby, is only now fully appreciated, and work in years to come will be based on the ideas contained in this paper. The proceedings of this most useful conference should certainly be in every science library and, to a certain extent, they can be regarded as reference books.

Although the reproduction and printing are reasonable, if not in any way elaborate, the price of the volumes seems rather high. It is a pity that the book, which came out one year after the conference was held, still contains a number of misprints, the most misleading ones being found in the index of Vol. 2, where twenty-two contributions have been indexed with the wrong page number owing to the fact that one contribution was erroneously split in two, whereas at the end of the book the page number again agrees with that of the papers, because one page number was left out for one contribution altogether.

H. SELIGMAN

Nitrogen Metabolism in Plants

By Prof. George C. Webster. (Row-Peterson Biological Monographs.) Pp. viii+152. (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Company, 1959.) 3.50 dollars.

THIS is an age in which authoritative reviews in the fields of plant physiology and plant biochemistry are tending to be concentrated in encyclopaedias or other massive volumes which are too expensive for individual ownership; indeed, the influence of such compilations on scientific thought may prove to be limited because of the physical difficulty of consulting them. Thus, there is still very much room for smaller publications in which substantial fields of investigation are reviewed authoritatively and, though not exhaustively, with sufficient documentation for the reader to be made aware of the more important original sources. Such a review is provided by this very useful little book, which is concerned mainly with the chemical pathways of nitrogen metabolism in plants and has been written by an author who is already well known for his own original studies in this field. The topics covered are nitrogen nutrition, amino-acid metabolism, biosynthesis of amides and peptides, protein and nucleic acid metabolism, nitrogen metabolism of excised organs and ageing tissues, and translocation of

nitrogenous substances. The book is written in straightforward and clear style, marred only occasionally by infelicitous phrases or repetitive treatment. In a few instances (for example, Table 2) the identity of the plant material to which the data presented refer is not stated; three misprints were noted, while an arrow appears to be missing from Fig. 26. These are minor blemishes in an otherwise workmanlike text, which I recommend for use by research workers and honours students.

G. BOND

Bird Watching for Beginners

By Bruce Campbell. (Puffin Book PS71.) Pp. 240. (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1959.) 2s. 6d.

THIS is a revised edition of a book first published in 1952. It is divided into three sections. The first explains how to become a bird watcher and the limits of classification. The second discusses two hundred common British resident and visiting species in systematic order from crows to game-birds. It deals mainly with relationships, distribution and habits, and points out aspects "suitable for study by the ordinary bird watcher".

Part 3 briefly surveys various problems; how to set about identification, how to make bird counts, how to study birds at the nest, and so on.

The author is highly qualified to give instructions to beginning bird watchers. He has an extensive practical knowledge of field-study and his association with the British Trust for Ornithology has given him a wide background of the subject based on the experience of others. Ability to impart this knowledge has been gained from long practice as lecturer and broadcaster. He has a readable style and pleasing personal approach which not only provides information but also inspires enthusiasm.

J. D. MACDONALD

The Rhondda Valleys

A Study in Industrial Development, 1800 to the Present Day. By E. D. Lewis. Pp. xiii+312+3 plates. (London: Phoenix House, Ltd., 1959.) 25s. net.

THE Rhondda became a borough in 1955 and to mark the event sponsored the publication of this excellent local history. Begun twenty years before as a master's thesis for the University of Wales, its author, the son of a Rhondda collier and now a Rhondda headmaster, has expanded his work to a scholarly and well-documented local history. The story of the Rhondda is well known, being that of a sparsely populated, picturesque, well-wooded valley, rarely penetrated by strangers at the beginning of the nineteenth century; it passed through a whole cycle of industrial development within the next hundred years, to be hit with more than average severity by the depression following the First World War. What would perhaps, in another continent and another context, have become a ghost town as its *raison d'être* faded, had too great a reservoir of human vitality to succumb. Much of the book is devoted to the human story—the early working conditions, the rise and temporary fall of trade unionism, and the later role of the Rhondda as stormy pioneer and leader in new concepts of management and labour relationships. The final chapter, dealing with the period from 1914 to the present day, makes it clear that the story is far from ended.

L. DUDLEY STAMP