

*Strange Adventures in Dicky-Bird Land.* By R. Kearton, F.Z.S. Pp. xiii + 195. Illustrated with photographs direct from Nature by Cherry Kearton. (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd.) Price 3s. 6d.

"*Ugly, a Hospital Dog. With Recitations and Readings.*" By G. H. R. Dabbs, M.D. Pp. viii + 200. (London: C. W. Deacon and Co., 1901.) 1s.

*Wonders in Monsterland.* By E. D. Cuming. With illustrations by J. A. Shepherd. Pp. xii + 258. (London: George Allen, 1901.)

*The Child's Pictorial Natural History.* Part I. Pictured by C. M. Park. Pp. 24. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1901.) 1s.

THE four books of which the titles are given above have been published at a time when people are finding suitable gift-books for Christmas presents to children who have an interest in natural history.

Mr. Kearton's volume is an attempt to express incidents in the lives of birds in an autobiographical form. The style of composition is inelegant in places, and it requires a good imagination to think of birds using such colloquialisms as: "It strikes me very forcibly we are in for more hard times," "Good old Bunny," "Guess what got her, and beware my up-to-date young friend," "Go for him, Mr. Missel Thrush." But perhaps this free and familiar form of expression will be appreciated by juvenile readers, who will certainly admire the excellent illustrations.

The first part of Dr. Dabbs's book is also in the autobiographical form, the narrator being a bull-dog who attaches himself to a hospital, and renders assistance to various members of the staff at different times. The second part of the book contains recitations and readings for odd hours.

"Wonders in Monsterland" is a nonsense-book in which the subjects are some extinct animals, disguised under such names as the Master Don, Dino Therium, Phee and Oh-don't-op Teryx, Icky Ornix, Mackie Rodus and Ann Thropithecus. The narrative is very funny in places, and young people cannot fail to find enjoyment in reading it. The book could appropriately be described as a comic history of extinct monsters.

Popular characteristics of twelve wild animals of other countries, such as the tiger, elephant, wolf and giraffe, are described and illustrated in Mr. Park's book, with occasional Biblical references. A child might profitably read the book in connection with a visit to the Zoological Gardens.

*What's What. A Guide for to-day to Life as it is and Things as they are.* By Harry Quilter, M.A. Pp. xii + 1182. (London: Sonnenschein and Co., Ltd., 1902.) Price 6s. net.

THERE is an astonishing amount of information upon a variety of subjects in this book. The volume is, in fact, a kind of "Enquire Within for Everything," but with this difference—matters of fact are, perhaps, less frequent than matters of opinion. The introduction of this personal element imparts a lightness to the contents not usually possessed by books of reference, but after a while the reader comes to the conclusion that the editor might usefully have abridged his views and those of his contributors in order to increase the number of subjects described.

At present the book cannot be depended upon as a volume of reference; that is to say, words or terms which we expect to find in it are absent as often as not. Something is said about chemistry—not very instructive, it must be confessed—but nothing about physics; light occurs, but not the spectroscope; conservation of energy, but not conservation of matter; the moon, but not the sun; botany, but not zoology; the Hessian fly, but not the gipsy moth or Colorado beetle; hypnotism, but not

hygiene; hydraulics, but not pneumatics; pathology, but not histology; geography, but not geology; equator, but not ecliptic; epilepsy, but not paralysis; and these are but a few examples of the inconsistencies of the book. In general, the information given is correct, but the following remarks upon the celestial equator form one of the exceptions to this statement:—"This does not always remain fixed, never passing exactly the same stars, but turning in 26,000 years a little nearer to the axis of the ecliptic. This causes the precession of the equinoxes, each of which occurs 20 minutes earlier in point of time than the last." A reader would be justified in speaking disrespectfully of the equator after trying to understand an explanation of this kind.

*The Self-Educator in Botany.* By R. S. Wishart, M.A. Pp. xiv + 226. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900.) Price 2s. 6d.

THIS book is ostensibly written to enable students to obtain a knowledge of botany without receiving personal supervision and instruction. Thus the author sets before himself an onerous task the difficulties of which he has quite failed to realise. Indeed, the book displays throughout the crudest knowledge of the subject, and this is set forth in a loose and disjointed fashion without any particular arrangement or continuity of argument. Even where a good exercise is given, or an instructive experiment described, as at p. 92, the full value is lost through inadequate explanation or incomplete description. The aim of the writer to provide practical scientific knowledge in a logical manner has certainly not been attained; rather it is to be feared that the student who should work through the book will even then find that he does not know much, and most assuredly he will not know accurately.

*Bastarde zwischen Maisrassen mit besondere Berücksichtigung der Xenien.* By Prof. C. Correns. Bibliotheca Botanica. Pp. 53. (Stuttgart: E. Nägele, 1901.)

XENIA is the name given to the results of the crossing of the plant by a foreign pollen, exhibited in some peculiarity which appears in the seed itself, and does not—as would be the case in a hybrid—remain in abeyance until the plant which the seed produces has grown up.

Thus if a certain race of maize which produces yellow-skinned grains is crossed with pollen from a race which has violet-skinned grains, it is found that the resulting seed in many cases will be violet. It has also been discovered that this is because the potency of the pollen of the violet-skinned race makes itself effective, by means of one of the pollen nuclei, on the endosperm, and the latter acquires a violet outer layer in place of its accustomed yellowish one. In other cases of xenia other characters of the pollen-yielding parent make themselves effective on the embryo-sac—e.g. sugary in place of starchy cell-contents.

In the paper under review Prof. Correns has undertaken—and, be it remarked, has very successfully carried out—a large number of experiments on hybrids and xenia of maize, the results of which are set forth in great detail and illustrated by two plates of brilliantly coloured figures.

*A Country Reader for Use in Village Schools.* By H. B. M. Buchanan, B.A. Pp. vii + 248. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1901.) Price 1s. 6d.

COMMON domestic and wild animals are described in this book in a simple and instructive style, capable of being understood by the elder children in village schools, and by adults who are only familiar with words of everyday life in the country. The book will impart to those who read it an intelligent knowledge of animal life in and around a farm. The illustrations, mostly reproduced from photographs, are very fine.