

not been attempted; in fact, only nine species of *Carex* are included, and the list of grasses is limited to one species from each of eight characteristic genera. But for the more interesting alpine genera the list is nearly complete; thus, under *Saxifraga* about fifty species are described, and a few others are mentioned; this is very inclusive, although the species *Rudolphiana* and *Clusii* do not appear.

Most botanists are aware that Mr. Thompson has an intimate knowledge of the Alps and is familiar with many of the floral rarities; they will therefore be prepared to find the concise descriptions and useful critical notes that form a prominent feature in the book. Another subject on which Mr. Thompson is equally qualified to advise is the cultivation of alpine plants, and this aspect of the book, dealing with a popular hobby, is likely to attract so much attention that, contrary to the opinion expressed in the preface, one is inclined to say that it will be more sought after and used by the enthusiastic cultivator of alpinism than by the ardent botanist who wishes to find and identify alpine species. The latter would in the first instance prefer a local flora that includes all the plants of the country; but subsequently he would find the present work most desirable for corroboration, critical determination, and comparison with allied species from other countries. There is a measure of inconsistency in the omission of generic descriptions for many genera, but this does not detract from a book which is primarily valuable for its expert and critical information. The three hundred coloured illustrations are on the whole accurate in the matter of form and colour. Certain general facts and the broad outlines of cultivation are discussed in three interesting introductory chapters.

Vocabulaire Forestier: Français—Allemand—Anglais.
Par J. Gerschel, revu par W. R. Fisher.
Cinquième édition, considérablement augmentée.
Pp. vi+192. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911.)
Price 5s. net.

THIS is the fifth edition of a dictionary in French, German, and English of the technical terms which are usually met with in books on forestry in those languages. Compiled by Dr. Gerschel, late professor at the Nancy Forest School, the present edition was revised by the late Prof. W. R. Fisher, of Oxford, shortly before his death, and is now issued by the Clarendon Press. The book contains 192 closely printed pages, and is very useful, as it not only includes the technical terms peculiar to the art of forestry, but also most of the common terms of the sciences of botany, zoology, and geology, and, in addition, words pertaining to hunting and shooting. The German and French parts appear to be well done; but the English part requires to be thoroughly revised, as it contains many curious errors and omissions.

A good many words are doubtful or obsolete English, as "imp" used instead of "graft," "wood-apple tree" instead of "crab tree," "Virginian climber," p. 149, is commonly called "Virginia creeper," and "forest science," p. 149, should be "science of forestry."

Printer's errors are not uncommon, as, p. 20, "*Picea excelsa*, Hink," should read "Link"; p. 142, "*excelsa*" should read "*excelsa*"; p. 152, "*Liquidamber*" should read "*Liquidambar*"; and p. 175, "Scot's fir" should read "Scots fir." The statements made on p. 164 that the "durmast" is the "Turkey oak" and that "*Q. coccifera*" is the "scarlet oak" are erroneous. "Oseraie," p. 190, is not "willow culture," but "osier-bed."

An objectionable feature in the English part is the constant use of hyphens, where they are not usually employed, as "expectation-value," "coppice-with-

standards," which are usually printed "expectation value," "coppice with standards."

It is to be hoped that in the next edition these obvious faults, which impair the value of this useful book, will be removed.

Reports from the Laboratory of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh. Edited by Sir John B. Tuke and Dr. James Ritchie. Vols. x. and xi. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1911.)

THESE two handsome volumes are evidence, if that were needed, of the activity of research in the laboratories of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. They are also a testimony to the valuable work which may be done by means of the funds of a private corporation, aided in this case by a grant from the Carnegie Trust. The papers (which have all appeared elsewhere) are divided into four groups, those appertaining to anatomy, pathology, pharmacology, and physiology. All appeal to the specialist, and it is not possible to select any for special comment.

Of some general interest is the dietary study of the five halls of residence for students in Edinburgh, by Miss J. D. Cameron. The average cost per man per day (exclusive of condiments and beverages) is 15'1 pence, of which 66 per cent. is expended on animal food. The waste varies considerably, from 2'4 to 7'0 per cent. of the total money spent on food, but is about one-half of that in the American studies of college residences.

Dr. Berry Hart discusses the nature and origin of the "free-martin"—an apparently sterile cow, co-twin with a potent bull—of which John Hunter described three specimens, the organs of which are preserved in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, London. It seems to be established that the free-martin, when the co-twin is a potent male, is a sterile male, and not a sterile female. R. T. H.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

January Meteor-showers, 1912.

THE following are the computed particulars of the meteor-showers which become due during nearly the first fortnight in January:—

Epoch 1912, January 4, 11h. 30m. (G.M.T.), twenty-first order of magnitude. Principal maximum, January 3, 2h. 55m.; secondary maxima, January 3, 9h. 50m., 13h. 40m., and January 4, 10h. 25m.

Epoch January 5, 10h., approximately ninth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, January 6, 4h. 10m.; secondary maximum, January 6, 15h. 35m.

Epoch January 7, 0h. 30m., thirteenth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, January 5, 18h. 20m.; secondary maxima, January 6, 9h. 40m., and 19h. 30m.

Epoch January 7, 6h. 30m., fifth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, January 6, 22h.; secondary maxima, January 5, 21h., and January 6, 15h. 45m.

Epoch January 8, 2h., approximately eighteenth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, January 8, 3h. 35m.; secondary maxima, January 9, 2h. 30m. and 20h. 40m.

The first few days of January are comparatively quiet, the greatest meteoric activity occurring during the period January 5-9. The Quadrantid epoch of January 4, which is not so strong as the corresponding epoch of 1911, has its principal maximum early on the afternoon of January 3; but the other maxima will probably furnish some bright meteors, notwithstanding the presence of a full moon.

Dublin, December 23, 1911.

JOHN R. HENRY.