

mon British beetles and spiders. In dealing with either group he gives first a short general account of structure and habits, next an outline classification of tribes or families, and then a list of some common species with characteristics so superficially described that the promise "How to Identify Them" contained in the title cannot be considered as fulfilled. The 228 beetles chosen for listing are illustrated by natural-size photographs, most of which are too obscure to be of use. The larger photographs of some selected spiders, supplemented by four plates of outline drawings, are less unsatisfactory, but the front-view portrait on p. 50 lettered "Wolf-spider" is evidently taken from a jumping-spider (Salticid). The classification and nomenclature adopted for both spiders and beetles are those of the naturalists of fifty years ago.

Canning and Bottling, with Notes on other Simple Methods of Preserving Fruit and Vegetables.

By Dr. H. P. Goodrich. With an Introduction by Prof. Frederick Keeble. Pp. x+70. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1918.) Price 2s.

IN spite of its modest size, this book contains a great deal of valuable information on bottling, canning, pulping, drying, and salting vegetables and fruit. In the first part of the book the author describes fully practical methods, while in the second part a brief account of the behaviour of bacteria and fungi, the micro-organisms which have to be fought by the preserver of fruit and vegetables, is given. The canning of fruit, which is extremely popular in America, but comparatively little used by amateurs in this country, is warmly recommended in regard both to the flavour and quality of the products and to the rapidity and simplicity with which the work can be carried out. The fear of tin and of ptomaine poisoning, which has prevented some people from canning vegetables, is shown to be entirely groundless.

The Stars, and How to Identify Them. By E. Walter Maunder. Pp. 64. (London: Charles H. Kelly, n.d.)

THE war has renewed interest in the constellations as guides for night-marching, etc., and several handbooks have been published for this purpose. Mr. Maunder gives here in a condensed form much of the information contained in his "Astronomy of the Bible" and his numerous papers on early Babylonian astronomy.

The constellations of the entire celestial sphere are shown in twenty-six clearly printed maps; the constellation figures are not drawn, but the stars of each group are connected by thin lines, which in many cases give some rough idea of the object the name of which it bears. A summary of the ancient myths relating to the grouping of the constellations is given, as affording a useful aid to the memory regarding their mutual configuration. Four northern and one southern key maps indicate the positions of the constellations at the various seasons.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Observations of Nova Aquilæ in India.

IN NATURE of June 13 I note that the earliest observation of Nova Aquilæ in England was made by Miss Grace Cook at 9.30 G.M.T. on June 8, and the magnitude was estimated as equal to Altair. In India the star was seen and recognised as a nova about five hours earlier by Mr. G. N. Bower in Madras, who has sent me his original notes made at 10 p.m. Indian Standard Time on June 8 (corresponding with 4.30 p.m. G.M.T.). Mr. Bower was occupied in pointing out the principal stars and constellations to a friend, and identifying them with the aid of Mrs. Evershed's "Guide to the Southern Stars." Turning to the eastern sky, he at once saw a star on the borders of Aquila and Serpens which he could not place. It appeared to be as bright as Altair, or possibly brighter, but not so bright or white as Vega. Altair was, however, unfavourably placed for the comparison.

At Jhelum, North India, the star was independently discovered on June 9, 3.30 a.m. I.S.T. (10 p.m., June 8, G.M.T.), by Mr. C. L. Dundas, I.C.S., who kindly advised me by telegram of his observation. He also estimated it as equal to Altair, but at the same time on the following night "it was apparently equal to Vega."

At Kodaikanal I was photographing the spectrum of Venus on the morning of June 8, and can state with some confidence that the nova had not then appeared, or perhaps it would be safer to say that it had not risen above the second magnitude. The sky was exceptionally clear that morning, and the brilliance of the Milky Way attracted special attention between 4 a.m. and dawn, about an hour later. Mrs. Evershed and myself were both observing the Milky Way, and both had the possibility of detecting novæ at the back of our minds. This narrows down the time of the outburst to between 11 p.m. G.M.T. on June 7 and 4 p.m. G.M.T. June 8.

The spectrum of the nova has been studied here in some detail, thanks to the partial failure of the monsoon in Southern India, which resulted in a good number of fairly clear nights from early in June to the middle of July. Two series of spectrum photographs were obtained simultaneously—a large-scale series with a 6-in. prismatic camera, and a small-scale series with a 2-in. prismatic camera, the latter showing considerable extension in the ultra-violet. By a special arrangement of the apparatus I was able to photograph a comparison spectrum of Arcturus accurately aligned with the nova, so that the wavelengths in the nova spectrum have been determined by reference to the lines in Arcturus.

On the nights of June 12-13 and 13-14 many of the absorption lines in the nova appeared to be in duplicate, and there are two series of hydrogen absorption lines, both enormously displaced towards violet; the wider, more refrangible series in H β , H γ , and H δ gives a mean displacement corresponding with 2700 km./sec., whilst the comparatively narrow, less refrangible series gives 1720 km./sec., both in the direction of approach. This is with reference to Arcturus, and uncorrected for the component of the earth's motion, which is very small. In later plates the more refrangible set