

*The Southern New Hebrides: an Ethnological Record.* By C. B. Humphreys. Pp. xvi + 214. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1926.) 12s. 6d. net.

ANTHROPOLOGISTS will be grateful to Mr. Humphreys for this ethnological record of the Southern New Hebrides for two reasons. Very little systematic work has been done on this interesting little group of five islands, if Speiser's work on the New Hebrides as a whole be excepted; and, as everywhere in the Pacific, changing conditions make it imperative that ethnological investigations should be pushed on before it is too late. Sophisticated as the natives of the New Hebrides are through their contact with Europeans, Mr. Humphreys was fortunate enough to find a few old men who still retained a memory of old customs. How important and how fortunate this was is attested by the intricate and somewhat puzzling character of the culture, especially on the island of Tanna. Mr. Humphreys puts forward a very interesting hypothesis to account for the differences in the form of the chieftainship in that island, the nebulous form of totemism found in the group, the variations in the cephalic index, and other physical characters as well as other peculiarities. It is difficult to suggest an alternative, and Mr. Humphreys' hypothesis must for the present hold the field; but it involves an exceptional history for the island of Tanna for which it is hard to account satisfactorily.

### Natural History.

*British Spiders: their Haunts and Habits.* By Theodore H. Savory. Pp. xxi + 180. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1926.) 6s. net.

IN recent years, both in England and America, various attempts have been made by writers on the habits of spiders to direct the attention of the budding naturalist to a group of animals little studied, though everywhere abundant. But when interest has been aroused and the reader has been tempted to pursue the matter further and attain to a more intimate acquaintance with these curious creatures, he finds himself at a loss. The would-be student of butterflies or birds has his way made plain before him by a multitude of more or less satisfactory handbooks, but the books which deal in detail with the British spider fauna are either antiquated or unprocurable, or both.

Mr. Savory's book will help the aspiring araneologist at least one step on his way; and we have little doubt that it will be received with the hearty welcome it deserves.

Mr. Savory's main object being 'first aid' in the identification of specimens, he might perhaps have 'cut the cackle and come to the horses' a trifle more quickly. We by no means imply that the 'cackle' is not excellent, or that it is a mere imitation of previous prattlers—Mr. Savory is a keen observer on his own account—but, presumably, his greatest appeal will be to those who already know something of the biological side of the subject and are impatient to get to business. We heartily approve his plan of giving, where possible, the Blackwallian names of species, and thus rendering available Miss Staveley's book with its excellent reproductions of Blackwall's coloured figures—a book

which he informs us is still obtainable. Savory plus Staveley should be a real help forward.

The illustrations of the book before us are its chief weakness. The figure of *Segestria senoculata* (Fig. 13) is really too crude, and Fig. 18 gives *Walckenaeria acuminata* ten eyes! Then an accurate detailed drawing of the chelicerae seems absolutely necessary. Without it, how is the student to interpret such terms as "primary fang teeth" and "lower margin of the chelicerae" used in the dichotomic tables? We venture to direct attention to these slight blemishes in view of future editions, for which we anticipate a demand.

C. W.

*Index Kewensis Plantarum Phanerogamarum. Supplementum Sextum: Nomina et Synonyma Omnium Generum et Specierum ab initio anni MDCCCXXVI usque ad finem anni MDCCCXX nonnulla etiam antea edita complectens.* Ductu et consilio A. W. Hill. Pp. iii + 222. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1926.) 70s. net.

THE appearance of a new supplement to the "Index Kewensis" is matter for rejoicing among botanical taxonomists, on whose behalf we thank the Director and the members of the Herbarium staff who have brought the record of names and synonyms of genera and species of flowering plants up to the end of 1920. The present supplement nominally deals with the years 1916-1920, but also includes many names unavoidably omitted from publications issued in 1914 and 1915, and also earlier names which have been traced since the publication of the original work and its successive supplements. One of the latter, "Stilla," W. Young (1783), followed by the remark 'nomen. Quid?' raises a question as to the desirability of indexing *nomina nuda*. Taxonomically they do not exist; they are neither 'names' nor 'synonyms,' and space would be saved by their omission. A certain French botanist is credited (?) with one or more in almost every other column.

It would be ungrateful, however, to cavil at so trivial a matter in a periodical of such interest; for the "Kew Index" makes as interesting reading as does a good dictionary; at any rate for the taxonomist who takes his work seriously. He may, for example, speculate as to what proportions of the entries in the columns represent genuine botanical work, and what are mere exercises in nomenclature; and as to whether the round-table conference between taxonomists at the recent Botanical Congress at Ithaca will prove a step forward towards the attainment of uniformity in nomenclature. The restoration of names which had been neglected or overlooked by earlier workers is responsible for a large number of entries, especially on behalf of American botanists; these are indicated by citation of the earlier name following the entry.

The "Index" records impartially foibles and follies and the results of honest work, and it brings to the notice of botanists rare and obscure publications. One of the latter (erroneously dated 1889) has yielded two and a half columns of names, credited almost entirely to one individual, under the genus *Cinnamomum*; a somewhat surprising entry is "*Crucifera*—genus omnia genera *Cruciferarum* amplectens"; while the immortality of a foolish action is illustrated