

## Our Bookshelf.

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English.* Adapted by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler from *The Oxford Dictionary*. New edition, revised by H. W. Fowler. Pp. xv + 1444. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1929.) 7s. 6d. net.

THIS is so far the best of the smaller and cheaper English dictionaries that comparison seems almost ludicrous. We have a book of nearly 1500 pages, well printed and stoutly bound, for seven and sixpence. Simply as a book, it must be the cheapest thing now on the market. But the contents deserve a close examination, and increase at every step our admiration.

The book is based on the great "Oxford Dictionary" which alone made it possible. The first edition, which was published in 1911, was compiled when the great book had only reached the letter R. At that time the Fowlers, who are responsible for this smaller work, drew for the later letters on Skeat, the "Century", and other standard books then extant. The completion of the O.E.D. has now enabled Mr. H. W. Fowler, who is alone responsible for this new edition, to revise in the light of the latest authority. He has produced a dictionary which will probably become the handy daily book of reference for everyone who writes, and is quite sufficient for ordinary educational purposes. It contains more than forty thousand words, and abundant phrases illustrating their use. These are not quotations from named sources; for that one has to refer to the original work. But they are specially chosen to exhibit the language as a living thing. They are, in fact, rather colloquial and current than literary, and this is why the book will have its great vogue and serve to build up as well as restrain the growth of English in the rising generation. It will be used side by side with the same author's "Modern English Usage".

Testing the dictionary here and there on scientific words, we find that it contains more than any other of like size and scope, but that preference is given to words deriving from the older established sciences, especially mathematics, over newer words arising, say, from biology. Quite a sound and useful definition is given of 'integral', 'differential', 'potential', but nothing of 'dominant', 'recessive', etc., in the Mendelian sense. This is mentioned not so much as a fault as to indicate the sort of line that has been taken. The book is a marvel of cheapness, compression, and good judgment on the lines indicated by its source and its purpose. F. S. M.

*Elementary Laboratory Experiments in Organic Chemistry.* By Prof. Roger Adams and Prof. John R. Johnson. Pp. xi + 304. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928.) 8s.

THE authors describe this book as a "laboratory manual designed for first semester students in organic chemistry". It offers a carefully planned series of practical exercises permitting of com-

binations to suit various circumstances. Examples of operations illustrating the general principles of purification, etc., are followed by some forty representative preparations. Many of the latter are naturally 'hardy annuals', but we notice the introduction of *n*-butyl alcohol in an instructive sequence of operations leading up to *n*-valeric acid. Noteworthy also is the 'subjective' synthesis by the student, *in vivo*, of hippuric acid.

The experimental details and precautions are exactly stated throughout and are quite up-to-date: thus, acetaldehyde is prepared by depolymerising paraldehyde, and valuable hints—too often omitted—are given in the accounts of acetamide and acetanilide. The authors suggest that the inclusion of such details as the amounts of washing and drying agents to be used may arouse criticism; but probably most experienced teachers will agree that it is almost impossible to be too precise in initiating students into a correct laboratory routine in this subject. The emphasis laid in the foreword upon accuracy and neatness is also very necessary. A useful appendix contains tables of densities, etc., and also summaries of the materials and time required for each experiment. It should be mentioned that the work does not comprise the identification of organic substances.

The book is economically but adequately illustrated, and it is well printed on a good paper which should withstand ordinary laboratory wear. The leaves are perforated and printed on one side only, so that the experimental sheets may be detached as required; incidentally, the blank pages are reckoned in the pagination. The volume can be confidently recommended as an excellent medium for effecting the introduction of students to the practice of organic chemistry. J. R.

*Section de Géodésie de l'Union Géodésique et Géophysique internationale.* Publication spéciale No. 2: *Tables de l'Ellipsoïde de Référence internationale adopté par l'Assemblée générale de Madrid le 7 octobre 1924 dans le système de la Division sexagésimale de la Circonférence.* Calculées sous la direction du Général G. Perrier par E. Hasse. Pp. 20 + 91. (Paris: Union Géodésique et Géophysique internationale, 1928.)

THE Section of Geodesy of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics decided at its 1924 meeting, in Madrid, to adopt an international ellipsoid of reference for geodetic measurements, and chose Hayford's ellipsoid, with the ellipticity 1/297.0 and major semi-axis 6378.388 km. as its primary elements. The secretariat was charged to publish tables of reference for this ellipsoid both for the sexagesimal and centesimal measures of angle: the present volume fulfils the first of these tasks. The tables, printed from typewritten sheets, are legible, well arranged, and well bound, as befits a work of reference. They give, to ten decimal places, for each minute of latitude, the logarithms of  $N$ ,  $\rho$  and  $\sqrt{N\rho}$ , where  $N$  is the principal normal or radius of curvature of a meridian section, and  $\rho$  is the other principal radius of curvature; also, to six decimals, the logarithm of the factor of spherical