

*The Book of Amber.* By Dr. George C. Williamson. Pp. 268 + 5 plates. (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1932.) 15s. net.

MR. HERON-ALLEN'S catholicity of interests includes the study of some aspects of amber; and he therefore very appropriately contributes a foreword to Dr. Williamson's most admirable book upon the origin, history, characters, distribution, and uses of this remarkable fossil resin from pines and other trees. It is, indeed, strange that, with the exception of some rare booklets and scattered papers or incidental chapters in other works, no general monograph of this kind, bringing together everything of interest concerning amber, has been published. Dr. Williamson writes with expert knowledge of his subject, and has devoted his leisure time over a period of twelve years to the compilation of his book. We join with Mr. Heron-Allen in a "tribute of admiration" at the result.

Among the subjects surveyed are classical allusions to amber; prehistoric amber routes in Europe; remains of plants, insects, and other creatures enclosed in amber; folklore, and medical uses; mineralogical characteristics; types, the chief of which are represented in a beautiful coloured frontispiece; tests; and pressed amber. The bibliography near the end of the book shows that Dr. Williamson is familiar with practically every work or paper relating directly or indirectly to amber. It may be of interest to recall in this connexion that Mr. Minakata described in *NATURE* of Jan. 24, 1895, Chinese theories of the origin of amber, including the resin of pines, and that Mr. Murray Stuart gave reasons in the issue of Jan. 20, 1923, for believing that some specimens of pale Chinese amber represented fossilised dammar—a resinous substance produced by certain bees.

*Recent Advances in Materia Medica: being a Description of the Methods of Preparing and Testing Sera and Vaccines, Hormones and Vitamins, with an Account of their Properties and Medicinal Uses.* By Dr. J. H. Burn. (The Recent Advances Series.) Pp. x + 224. (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1932.) 12s. 6d.

IN this volume of the "Recent Advances" Series, the author has confined himself to a consideration of some of those substances of value in therapeutics which are obtained from animal sources or require the use of animal tests of toxicity and potency before issue. The work is intended chiefly for students of pharmacy, and therefore includes certain elementary physiological details. It covers a field, however, of increasing importance; and its pages make available in small compass much information which ordinarily could only be obtained by a search of the original literature or a larger book dealing with biological assays. For this reason it can be recommended to physiologists and pharmacologists, as well as to medical practitioners who may wish to have some knowledge of the methods of preparation and test of biological products. The specialist may also find it useful for information on the subject of the biological assay

of substances with which he may have had no recent experience.

The earlier chapters deal with antitoxins, sera, and vaccines; the middle section is devoted to the hormones, liver extract, and the arsenobenzene group of compounds; in the final chapters the uses and tests of the vitamins are considered. In the last two chapters the application of the results of biological tests to human beings and the principles of biological methods are discussed. The volume gives a readable account of a subject which is related to many branches of medical science, and therefore likely to be neglected except by the specialist.

*The Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1932.* Edited by Dr. M. Epstein. Sixty-ninth Annual Publication, revised after Official Returns. Pp. xxxiv + 1474. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1932.) 20s. net.

THIS valuable volume with its mass of carefully revised statistical information appears with its usual regularity. The arrangement follows that of previous years, and the size of the book is essentially the same. No new States have made their appearance, though the cession of Manchuria occurred in time to be noted among the addenda. New population figures are given for Great Britain, Canada, France, Italy, and many other States the census of which fell in the year under review. In order to indicate more clearly the trend of trade of Great Britain with other countries, re-export figures have been added to the tables summarising the trade of each country. The usual introductory tables are given of world production of petroleum, coal, iron and steel, gold, etc. The two coloured maps show respectively the railways of Manchuria (now Manchow-kuo) and the Zuider Zee reclamation. In the latter, the completion of the North-west Polder marks the success of the first step in the scheme. The lists of books, official and non-official, given for each State are one of the most useful features of this reference volume.

*Electrical Machinery and Apparatus Manufacture: a Complete Work by Practical Specialists describing Modern Practice in the Construction and Manufacture of Apparatus and Machinery.* Edited by Philip Kemp. In several volumes, by various authors. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1931-32.) 6s. net each vol.

THESE volumes are nicely bound, of convenient size, and are clearly printed. They are not intended to replace existing textbooks, dictionaries, or encyclopædias. They may prove useful to experts in particular branches of electricity who desire to supplement their knowledge of the actual construction and manufacture of electrical machinery and apparatus. We liked the section on works organisation and administration by A. P. M. Fleming. The section also on accumulator construction and manufacture contains practical information not easily found elsewhere. The descriptions given range from heavy machinery down to the manufacture of thermionic valves.