

Short Notices

Agriculture and Horticulture

The Use of Fertilizers :

a Guide to the Manuring of Crops in Great Britain. By A. S. Barker. Pp. x+204. (London: Oxford University Press, 1935.) 7s. 6d. net.

"AGRICULTURISTS may feel that an addition to the numerous books dealing with fertilizers requires some vindication", says the author in his preface. We agree. The author proceeds to disarm criticism by limiting the primary scope of his book to farmers, fertiliser sellers and agricultural students. The reviewer would place fertiliser sellers first in this grouping, for the needs of the farmer and student are met elsewhere. "The Use of Fertilizers" is not, however, to be dismissed as superfluous. The mixing of fertilisers on the farm, the importance of 'condition' in fertiliser mixtures, and the use of 'concentrated' mixtures, are subjects dealt with authoritatively and helpfully. It is pleasant to see repeated emphasis laid on the absence of justification for trivial differences in the composition of mixtures. Valuation and the economics of fertiliser application are, as might be expected from the author's connexion with the fertiliser trade, exhaustively handled.

A noteworthy section of the book is that on the manuring of market garden crops. Much less experimental information is available about this than about the manuring of field crops. Indeed, fertiliser experiments have not infrequently given negative results, as though the high 'condition' in which market garden soils are maintained leaves little room for further response to artificials. In this section one would, therefore, have been particularly glad of experimental backing for the recommendations made. Possibly they are largely presented, in the author's phrase, "In the light of the experience of farmers and growers". At all events, this portion of the book fills, as well as can be in the absence of elaborate field experiments, a distinct gap in the literature on the use of fertilisers.

Biological Processes in Tropical Soils :

with Special Reference to Malaysia. By Dr. A. Steven Corbet. Pp. xiv+156+16 plates. (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1935.) 7s. 6d. net.

MANY interesting facts are introduced into this book, but they are so loosely knit together that the reviewer feels sorrow for the missed opportunity. The basis of the book is a graph, after E. C. J. Mohr, consisting of two curves with temperature as abscissa but no quantitative ordinate: from consideration of these curves the author deduces a perspective of tropical soil processes. It does not often happen that such an extended argument is based upon so unsubstantial

a foundation. Upon nitrification the author has done experimental work, but his exposition of it is not lucid: it is not clear whether Fig. 7 refers to bacterial or purely chemical change, under insolation or not. Most of the matter is similarly imprecise, with an irritating semblance of precision, as when the equation $B = R$ is allotted a line. Mr. H. Gunnery's sixteen magnificent photographs, skilfully sited and accurately focused, add considerably to the value of the text. The book is well produced and not expensive; it deserves the welcome due to a pioneer, but it is to be hoped that its successors will be more thorough.

H. N.

Anthropology and Ethnology

Naskapi :

the Savage Hunters of the Labrador Peninsula. By Frank G. Speck. Pp. 248+20 plates. (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935.) 3.50 dollars.

MR. SPECK's investigations have shown that the Naskapi-Montagnais are well worthy of study. Owing to the conditions of their environment the margin between existence and extinction is extremely narrow—in fact so narrow, that on occasion they have been forced to resort to cannibalism. Like the Eskimo, they appear to have established a state of equilibrium between environment and mode of life which has enabled them to survive, though precariously. Hence their culture, that of a purely hunting people, affords evidence of having been static over a long period. Variation would tend to extinction rather than survival and advance. Probably this state of equilibrium was attained very soon after their migration and settlement in their present location. This would account for the tenacity with which the people cling to their all-important animal cults, notwithstanding their ready acceptance, superficially, of the tenets of Christianity. In the character of these animal cults, in which the bear figures prominently, they show, more perhaps than any other Amerindian group, affinities with north-east Asia.

Mr. Speck has written a valuable account of certain aspects of Naskapi culture, and his further reports will be awaited with keen interest.

The Cassubian Civilization

By Dr. Fr. Lorentz, Dr. Adam Fischer and Dr. Tadeusz Lehr-Splawiński. Pp. xxvi+400+8 plates. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1935.) 21s. net.

IN this volume a German and two Polish ethnographers have collaborated in the examination of the ethnological affinities of the Cassubians, an ancient and peculiar tribe inhabiting the seashore on each side of the German-Polish frontier line. For