

British Trees and Shrubs, including those commonly planted:

a Systematic Introduction to our Conifers and Woody Dicotyledons. By H. Gilbert-Carter. Pp. xv+291. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1936.) 12s. 6d. net.

DR. GILBERT-CARTER'S aim in writing this sequel to his earlier "Catkin-Bearing Plants" is threefold: to enable students to identify our native woody plants, and many commonly cultivated ones; to illustrate Engler's system of classification and to show, by giving the derivations of all the Latin names used, that botanical nomenclature is a human subject with its roots in the past.

The descriptive treatment of the various groups is, on the whole, excellent, though some of the specific descriptions are too brief for certain identification. Under many genera and species valuable notes are given on distribution, ecological preferences, medicinal and culinary virtues, cultivation and general biology. Readers will very rarely have to rest content with the name of any specimen they identify; some illuminating sidelight is nearly always thrown on one or other aspect of the species concerned.

In his preface, and under many of the classes, groups, orders and families, the author discusses briefly the theory and application of Engler's system of classification. He is sceptical, as was Engler, of the possibility of making phylogenetic speculation the basis of natural classification, and uses throughout the noncommittal term 'affinity' when discussing relationship. Dr. Gilbert-Carter's remarks are a welcome contribution to a subject on which many taxonomists are by no means clear.

The footnotes giving the derivation and pronunciation of Latin names will be appreciated by all who value the historical approach, and are not content merely to repeat, parrot-like, the names that they are taught. The few inaccuracies that have crept into these admirable notes will doubtless be corrected in a future edition.

J. S. L. G.

Hardy Californians

By Lester Rowntree. Pp. xv+255+64 plates. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936.) 18s. net.

THE title of this book may call up visions of the "Old Timers" or "Redskins" of the novelist or of Hollywood, but in fact it deals principally with the hundreds of little-known, but none the less interesting and beautiful flowers of the amazing western State, California.

Mrs. Lester Rowntree takes us with her in her travels from what she calls the "Top of the World", altitudes of 9,000-14,000 ft., down to "Death Valley" 276 ft. below sea-level, and from the heat and glare of the Colorado Desert to the dense shade and humidity of the Redwood Forest; a revelation of the wide range of geographical conditions existing in that State. To the Nature lover or gardener, the book is as thrilling as any Western romance, for it is an introduction on an intimate and personal footing to the "plant personalities" she loves and describes so well.

The wealth of detail given on soils and situations, possible requirements in cultivation, etc., is of course intended to assist the gardener, but it is none the less interesting to the botanically minded, and particularly to the student of ecology. To some of the genera with which we in Britain have a nodding acquaintance, for example, *Penstemon*, *Lupinus* and *Viola*, the author devotes whole chapters, and one chapter is reserved for the wonderful and varied range of bulbous plants for which the West is famed. How many of the plants enumerated will prove hardy in Great Britain is an open question, for the book is written primarily for American gardeners and climatic conditions. A fair proportion will undoubtedly find congenial homes in Great Britain, for where else will they receive such hospitality or obtain climatic conditions so varied? G. W. ROBINSON.

Electrical Engineers' Handbook

(Vols. 4 and 5 of Wiley Engineering Handbook Series.) 4: Electric Power. Prepared by a Staff of Specialists under the Editorship of Dr. Harold Pender, William A. Del Mar, Knox McIlwain. Third edition rewritten. Pp. xiv+1268+37. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.; London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1936.) 30s. net.

ELECTRICAL engineers' handbooks have become both bulky and inconvenient, and contain much duplicated matter owing to the rapid development of the various branches of engineering. In this series it has been decided to publish the fundamental material which forms the basis of all engineering in a separate volume, and the existing handbooks as they are revised are being issued in several volumes containing material closely connected with the specialized branch considered. The entire new series of handbooks will give much more complete information on all topics of interest to engineers.

The latest developments of filament and discharge lamps, methods of air-conditioning, and ventilation fans are all described and the physical constants of building materials including their thermal conductivities are discussed. To the practical engineer, this book will be useful for reference. The latest information about electric power has been included.

The Cactus Eaters

By Julian A. Weston. Pp. 240+16 plates. (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, Ltd., 1937.) 10s. 6d. net.

IN "The Cactus Eaters" the author records the results of a stay of four months on the Goajira Peninsula on the southern shore of the Caribbean Sea and a boundary area between Colombia and Venezuela. His purpose was to observe the customs and culture of the Goajiro Indians. Although a stock-raising people, it is evident that in level of culture they have advanced little beyond the hunting stage, and the author discusses the interesting question of the nature of their subsistence in pre-Conquest days, as their stock must have been derived from the Spaniard. In view of environmental conditions and cultural indications, it is suggested that they may have been a people of a fishing culture.