

and the colours strong even to hardness. There are two fine sepia reproductions of water-colour drawings, flamingoes and Caspian pelicans, and the quality is so delicate that one could have wished that a coloured plate had been spared for a water-colour.

An odd mis-spacing occurs in the legend of the plate facing p. 10, "BRENT GEESE COMING OFF THE ZO STERA", which suggests an exotic lake rather than a common water-weed.

To anyone who delights in lively narrative and in the colouring, action and groupings of geese and ducks in the air or on water or land, this work will afford great pleasure.

JAMES RITCHIE.

A Book of Roses

By J. Ramsbottom. (The King Penguin Books.) Pp. 30+16 plates. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1939.) 1s. net.

THIS charming little book reproduces most excellently in octavo size sixteen coloured plates by that master of botanical portraiture Pierre Joseph Redouté, whose magnificent three-volume work "Les Roses" was published in thirty parts between 1817 and 1824. In addition to the exquisite reproductions, there is for each of the roses figured a short account giving botanical and horticultural information.

Of Redouté himself there is a good account. His career is full of interest. Shortly before the French revolution he came over to England to learn the English methods of stipple engraving not then used in France.

The major part of the text of the "Book of Roses" is devoted to the history of this queen of flowers. The earliest known European representation of the rose is found in the House of Frescoes at Knossos, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century B.C. The ancient coins of Rhodes had figures of roses, which flower gave the name to the island. Herodotus and Theophrastus, the father of botany, both give accounts of the rose. From these early representations and descriptions of the rose through Roman and medieval times to the present day, E. Ramsbottom follows up carefully and delightfully the history of the rose. His very readable and informing text seems to refute a passage of Walter de la Mare:

..... "No man knows
Through what wild centuries
Roves back the rose".

The "Book of Roses" is sure of a warm welcome, and the publishers are to be congratulated on their production of this most charming little book.

The World of Plant Life

By Prof. Clarence J. Hylander. Pp. xxii+722. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939.) 32s. 6d. net.

PROF. HYLANDER, in his preface to this volume, says that it was "planned and written with the specific purpose of making the layman familiar with a few of the interesting plants, both native and introduced, which are found in the United States".

He has purposely avoided using unnecessary technical terms, and has written throughout in a style that will appeal to the non-scientific reader. Indeed, in some instances he is perhaps too lax in his statements, as when he says in his preface that "Gardening is a fundamental instinct", a view that few psychologists would support!

After an introductory section on the whole plant kingdom, Prof. Hylander works step by step through the various groups, commencing with bacteria, and following more or less the system of Engler. As end-papers there are phylogenetic 'trees' showing the supposed lines of plant descent from fission plants to palms and pinks. It is perhaps a pity to include these in a popular work, as many readers will assume that such trees rest on a firmer foundation than is actually the case. This is especially so if Engler's system is used, as Engler himself was definitely sceptical regarding its phylogenetic basis.

Under each family Prof. Hylander mentions a number of genera and species of special interest to American readers, and the information he gives will undoubtedly provide a useful scientific background for the study of American vegetation, both native and introduced.

The illustrations are excellent, and special mention should be made of the attractive silhouettes at the head of each part.

Looking at Life

An Introduction to Biology. By A. M. S. Clark and G. Buckland Smith. Pp. xvi+224. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1939.) 2s. 6d.

THE cinema has now come to be regarded as a valuable tool in the construction of a biological education. The visual images that the viewer carries away with him are necessarily more stimulating and dynamic than the static photographs of text-books. But the transitory character of a film-showing has a disadvantage in that if a mistake in visual memory is made by a pupil it may well persist, so that the aim of the authors of "Looking at Life" in supplying an elementary book which could be used as a complement to the already available biological films is admirable.

Unfortunately, the text of the book contains little more than a potted version of the more rigid university botany and zoology courses and is scarcely suitable to serve as a first course in biology. Animal and plant types are described in a manner completely unrelated to any local environmental conditions, so that a syllabus based on this book would be, at least with regard to the animals, almost entirely theoretical, or would have to rely largely upon museum specimens. Better use of already existing films would have been made if the framework had been constructed around representative types of freshwater and terrestrial forms which are likely to be available. The text itself is a strange mixture of clarity and obscurantism, while the complete omission of gymnosperms is peculiar in a book where all the other main plant phyla are described.