

Herbs for Daily Use in Home Medicine and Cookery
By Mary Thorne Quelch. Pp. 328. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1941.) 8s. 6d. net.

THERE are here numerous pleasant anecdotes of the useful plants of our islands, culled from authorities both ancient and modern. The range is from Dioscorides through the herbalists—Gerard and Culpeper especially—to a gypsy woman “whose herbal lore I shall quote many times”. This promise is amply fulfilled. There are recipes for unusual dishes and cosmetics. Among the former “the boiled nettles, as described, may be surrounded by poached eggs”. Among the latter, to prepare a cold cream, “if two ounces of glycerine are purchased”. Alas, ’tis “if” indeed. The bulk of the book is concerned with medicinal purposes. As it is for the home, safety is wisely put first and the drug plants of the pharmacopœia are dismissed under the entry “poisonous plants”. The use of the yellow flowers of celandine as a cure for jaundice is derided as an example of the doctrine of signatures; but, on reading later that beetroot is “of value to anæmic women and girls”, you wonder if the superstition is so dead after all. Old wives’ simples may be traditionally mated with old wives’ tales, but they include (p. 272 under review) raspberry-leaf tea as an aid to easy labour, a prescription which has recently been lifted into official respectability. Here is a good half-hour’s browsing to be taken over the nuts and wine.

Butterflies

A Handbook of the Butterflies of the United States, complete for the Region North of the Potomac and Ohio Rivers and East of the Dakotas. By Prof. Ralph W. Macy and Prof. Harold H. Shepard. Pp. vii+247. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1941.) 3.50 dollars.

THIS handbook forms an admirable short guide to all species of butterfly inhabiting the region it is intended to cover. The area in question includes the United States and adjacent Canada lying to the east of Nebraska and the Dakotas and as far south as the northern borders of Missouri, Kentucky and Virginia. The only other book that treats in any detail of the butterflies of the territory referred to is the large, expensive and long out-of-print work of S. H. Scudder.

The chief purpose of the present book is to make identification as easy as possible. Keys to the species of each family are followed by individual descriptions, notes on habits, on distribution, on the larva and its food plants, times of appearance, manner of flight and so forth. The collector will consequently find a good deal of information written in an attractive style and in a brief, concise form. The book should have a ready sale among individuals, secondary schools, and colleges of the United States and parts of Canada. The price is very reasonable considering there are four good-quality coloured plates and a number of photographic text-figures.
A. D. I.

British Scientists

By Sir Richard Gregory. (Britain in Pictures Series.) Pp. 48+12 plates. (London and Glasgow: Wm. Collins, Sons and Co., Ltd., 1941.) 3s. 6d.

THIS little book puts in the simplest possible way some of the facts about the life and work of the great British men of science. Though containing only fifty pages, it is illustrated with twelve coloured plates and nineteen other illustrations. It is the sort of book which might be distributed in large numbers to soldiers and other large sections of the population who wish to know something of those who have had, it is increasingly realized, a most profound influence on the destiny of the human race. The book should also be suitable for readers in foreign lands, who are hazy about the existence and achievements of British men of science.

The information in the book will generally be known to scientific workers. They may not, however, have seen before coloured reproductions or the originals of several of the illustrations. For example, the picture of the third Lord Rayleigh working in his shirt sleeves in his laboratory is reproduced in colour. Then there is the painting from the University of Birmingham of Sir Oliver Lodge; the long, red doctor’s robe, emphasized by his great height, comes out brilliantly. In black and white, there is Francis Dodd’s drawing of Rutherford.

There are some misprints in the list of dates given at the end. These might be corrected in future editions.
J. G. CROWTHER.

Physics of the Air

By Dr. W. J. Humphreys. Third edition. Pp. xiv+676. (New York and London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1940.) 42s.

THIS book has reached the status of a classic of meteorology; the few weaknesses of the first edition having been for the most part remedied in the second, the third edition needed little more than bringing up to date by the addition of references to the advances of the last ten years. These additions have necessitated the writing of a number of new paragraphs, notably on the effect of clouds on incoming and outgoing radiation, energy equations of evaporation, and zones of silence in meteorological acoustics, the latter remedying a serious omission in the second edition, while throughout the book existing paragraphs have been expanded to take in work published up to 1939. In a few cases the additions are disappointing; for example, the subject of air-mass identification was surely worth more than a half-page, and the “principal Ice-age theories” do not include the well-known solar pluvial theory associated with the name of Sir George Simpson. As a whole, however, the book remains equal to its expressed purpose of providing an orderly assemblage of facts and theories, equally valuable as a text-book for advanced study or a work of reference on a meteorologist’s shelves. One unfortunate misprint has crept into the list of contents, where atmospheric refraction has been included under “Reflection phenomena”.