POMOLOGY

Cherries

By Norman H. Grubb. Pp. viii+186+28 plates. (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, Ltd., 1949.) 30*s*. net.

The Plums of England

By Dr. H. V. Taylor. (Agricultural and Horticultural Series.) Pp. viii+151+32 plates. (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, Ltd., 1949.) 30*s*. net.

THE author of "Cherries" rightly states that the planning of a satisfactory cherry orchard is a "difficult venture". Factors such as shelter, freedom from frost and the character of the soil must first be taken into account. The selection of suitable varieties involves consideration of their time of ripening and of a suitable mixture of varieties in order to ensure effective pollination; the best sorts of rootstocks must also be chosen. All these points are dealt with in the first part of the book. Are the traditional English methods of growing cherries the best, or would the growing of trees on shorter legs in cultivated ground show any advantage? These and other controversial matters are discussed in the chapter dealing with orchard management. Though comparatively brief, the section of the book dealing with the culture of cherries will be very useful to all growers of this fruit.

At every point, however, whether we are considering suitable soils, frost, disease resistance, rootstocks or pollination, we are confronted with the necessity for choosing the right varieties and for knowing that they are true to name. Almost inevitably in the course of propagation and distribution varieties are occasionally wrongly named, and it is very desirable that there should be records of the correct description of every named variety. Systematic pomologists in the past have not always agreed in their nomenclature, and there has been a need for their descriptions to be checked, revised and brought up to date owing to the introduction of new varieties. This is the work on which Mr. N. H. Grubb has been engaged for more than thirty years, and the results are seen in the last three-quarters of this volume. Here he discusses the characters which may be used in the identification of varieties, and shows how cherries may be classified in groups from consideration of their sweetness, colour of juice and season of ripening. The identification of any one variety in a group may be completed by reference to the detailed descriptions which comprise the remainder of the book. Some 240 varieties, including synonyms, are listed, and in every case the description is that made by the author himself; about 170 varieties which are growing in the collection at the East Malling Research Station are described very fully. All cherry growers and systematic pomologists will be grateful for the publication of this valuable book.

Though Dr. H. V. Taylor, owing to his other activities, has not lived in such intimate contact with his subject, yet from his own observations and from information collected from other sources he has compiled a book which all those who are interested in plums will be glad to read and to keep for reference. Part 1 of the book includes sections on the botany of plums, the origin of old varieties and the breeding of new ones. Attention is given to all aspects of plum growing, such as rootstocks, pollination, soils, nutrition, pests and diseases, while other sections include statistics relating to the production of plums in different parts of England and a chapter on the uses of plums for dessert and for processing in various ways. The identification of varieties is then considered, and a classification based on fruit-colour, shape and ripening period is given. Part 2 consists of descriptions of about 150 different kinds of plums grown in England. These are not full pomological descriptions but are a useful guide to the chief characteristics of the varieties, and, read in conjunction with the classification scheme, they will be a help in the identification of any variety. Much of the information in this book, as the author acknowledges, can be found in other publications; but it is useful to have it assembled in one volume.

Both these books have good bibliographies and are illustrated by colour photographs of fruit. Though in a few cases the accuracy of the reproduction of the natural colours may be questioned, the plates on the whole are excellent, being both beautiful and also valuable aids to the identification of varieties. The book on cherries also contains a number of illustrations in black-and-white, including photographs showing the characteristic habit of growth of some varieties of cherry trees.

G. T. SPINKS

CLASSIFICATION OF THE DRONGOS

A Revision of the Bird Family Dicruride

(Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History; Vol. 93, Article 4.) By Charles Vaurie. Pp. 199–342. (Philadelphia, 1949.) 1.75 dollars.

THE family Dicruridæ, or drongos, has its headquarters in the oriental region, though there are a few species in the Ethiopian and Austro-Papuan regions. The drongos were placed by Sharpe and Hartert with the birds of paradise, but more recent writers, including Mayr, consider they are more nearly allied to the orioles. According to the author, the phylogeny of the family is fairly simple, and he has reduced the number of genera to two, *Chætorhynchus* with twelve tail feathers and *Dicrurus* with ten. Many of the characters used by former workers as generic characters, such as the shape and structure of the tail, shape of the bird and presence or absence of a crest, Mr. Vaurie finds are very variable and unsuitable. He considers the Papuan mountain drongo *Chætorhynchus papuensis* the most primitive member of the family, and in the genus *Dicrurus* *D. ludwigii* and *D. atripennis*, both from Africa, are the least specialized.

The ashy drongos were formerly divided into three species, a grey, a dark-coloured and one with white facial markings. But after examining a large series, Mr. Vaurie comes to the conclusion that they belong to one species, and this is supported by the fact that in different parts of the range he has found what he considers are intermediates. The races of the greater racket-tailed drongo *D. paradiseus* are an interesting study in the development of the crest. Birds inhabiting Borneo and adjacent islands are crestless; specimens from the southern part of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra have developed a bushy tuft or a very short crest. The crest in the Javanese birds is well developed, but does not reach its full development until the most northerly part of the bird's range is reached in the Himalayas and Hainan.

This is a valuable review, and Mr. Vaurie is to be congratulated on his careful work.

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