

The Libraries of London

Seventeen Lectures delivered at the University of London School of Librarianship in April 1948. Edited with an Introduction by Raymond Irwin. Pp. iv+234. (London: Library Association, 1949.) 13s. 6d.; to Members of the Association, 10s. 6d.

THE account in this book of the Guildhall Library is the first real description of that Library that I have seen, and it is contained, moreover, in a book that, apart from a certain bias towards the librarian's rather than the user's point of view, is well suited to the needs of the undergraduate and student. Well printed and produced, as is customary with books bearing the imprimatur of the Library Association, this volume nevertheless carries a little too much the defects of an unco-ordinated series of lectures. They are not all of equal merit; but some, notably those on the British Museum, Science Museum Library, Patent Office Library, University of London Libraries, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Library and the National Central Library, could not easily have been better done for the purpose.

The editing, however, has not given sufficient cohesion to the book, and there is marked lack of balance and proportion. While, for example, thirty-seven pages are given to the Public Record Office and its work, in a text of 218 pages government departmental libraries are dismissed in ten, the medical libraries in eleven and the law libraries in fourteen. Interesting as is the account of the methods of work in the Public Record Office, it is purchased too dearly at the virtual exclusion of any account of the libraries of science and technology, other than those at the Patent Office, the British Museum (Natural History) and the Science Museum; that of the Chemical Society is not even mentioned, and there are the briefest references to those of the other learned or royal societies in the field of science (and these are sometimes only in the bibliography). Similarly in theology, there is no reference to Dr. Williams's library and other important theological libraries.

This balance should be redressed in subsequent editions if the book is to be commended without reservation to students of librarianship or to the London undergraduate generally. R. BRIGHTMAN

World Philosophy

A Search for Synthesis. By Prof. Oliver L. Reiser. Pp. ix+127. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1948.) 2.50 dollars.

ALTHOUGH this book was no doubt written in all seriousness and deadly earnest, yet it leaves one with the impression of being intellectually naïve. Briefly, the author's thesis is that this is one world, and it now requires one world culture; only on the basis of a common world view can the peoples of the world come together in peace and co-operative harmony. He believes that the only possible basis for such a synthesis is scientific humanism, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation must have a philosophy; cultural pluralism resists world unification.

Of course, he agrees that scientific humanism must take up a positive and understanding attitude towards aesthetic and religious experience. It "must be sensitive not only to the pulse of America but to the heartthrob of the world". Of course again, religion in general, and all the particular religions, will have to alter their attitudes radically in order to

fit themselves into the new world religion of Unesco and science; but the author betrays no consciousness of anticipating any acute difficulties in the working out of these essential re-adjustments.

J. V. LANGMEAD CASSERLEY

Annual Reports on the Progress of Chemistry for 1948

Vol. 45. Pp. 379. (London: Chemical Society, 1949.) 25s.

THE new volume of these reports maintains the high standard of the work. Among the topics dealt with are the chemical action of ionizing radiations, the structure of aqueous solutions of soap-like substances, chemical kinetics, terpenes, colchicine and related compounds, the functions of small molecules in biosynthesis, chromatography, insulin, chemotherapeutic approaches to the tuberculosis problem, and analytical chemistry. The section on inorganic chemistry reverts to the previous practice of giving a review of the whole subject, which seems much more useful and interesting than the arbitrary selection of one or two topics only for detailed treatment.

A Gardener's Log

By Edna Walling. Pp. xi+220+25 plates. (Melbourne and London: Oxford University Press, 1948.) 15s.

EDNA WALLING, who has already written two earlier books on horticulture in Australia, is clearly a true lover of gardens and gardening, and in the present volume she manages successfully to convey her enthusiasm to her readers. "A Gardener's Log" consists of more or less random notes on her gardening experiences in Australia, reprinted from letters appearing originally in *Australian Home Beautiful* and classified under the headings spring, summer, autumn and winter. Inevitably, such contributions to a magazine are light in tone and substance; but British readers will be particularly interested in the comments made on Australian native plants and their value in gardens, as many of them are little known at present in Great Britain. The illustrations are somewhat disappointing, both the photographs and the rather aimless thumbnail sketches scattered through the text.

J. S. L. GILMOUR

Patterns of Life

By Alan Dale. Pp. xii+338+8 plates. (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1949.) 12s. 6d. net; School edition, 7s. 6d.

THE spate of books intended to help those who are mildly interested to a fuller knowledge of natural history seems to be unending. The latest to join the stream is Alan Dale's "Patterns of Life", which is worthy of notice both for its comprehensive treatment of the subject and for its down-to-earth writing. Here, one feels, is a book written by someone who accepts all the difficulties which confront those who are beginning the study of natural history and are anxious not to miss anything on the way in their inquiries. Although less likely to stimulate the layman than works which are more attractively illustrated, Dale's book is almost certain to be used as one containing most of the hints and many of the answers. The author's enthusiasm radiates from his descriptions and could scarcely fail to infect the majority of readers for whom his book is intended.

T. H. H.