

aspects of biology have been largely omitted, as it has been estimated that if all the serials containing material on biological topics, both pure and applied, were to be included, the total number might exceed by five times the three thousand five hundred titles in the present list. The serials are grouped under five broad headings and, where possible, are subdivided according to country of origin. These headings include: general biology, botany, zoology, science of man, and general science publications containing contributions on biology or a significant number of biological papers in each issue or volume. Bibliographical details include title, issuing agency and publisher, date of first issue, frequency of publication and contents. The material comprising the regular features of a publication is classified and described as original research, analyses (including review literature and summaries of original research), proceedings of societies, conferences and congresses, abstracts, bibliographies, popular notes and book reviews. The value of this useful list would doubtless have been greatly enhanced had it included the World List abbreviations of each of the periodicals cited.

#### Old Akkadian Tablets from the Middle East

A CONSIDERABLE number of clay tablets have come into the possession of the Chicago Natural History Museum, and they have been deciphered by Prof. Ignace J. Gelb in *Fieldiana* (Anthropology, 44, No. 2; 1955). The writing is Old Akkadian, and internal evidence would suggest that they date to some period during 2261–2199 B.C. The tablets resemble closely some published and unpublished examples which bear the dates of Narâm-Sin and Šar-Kali-Šarri. Unfortunately, the new tablets were obtained from an Arab, and their exact provenance will never be known. But once again internal evidence would point to the Diyala river region, and this agrees with the meagre information obtained from the Arab. The tablets (except the last two, which are letters) are texts of legal and business interest. Usually at the top are a number of proper names, and these are presumably the witnesses of the transaction given below. While they cannot be said to be exciting reading, as naturally we know nothing of the people or of the transactions, the general picture of the ordinary life and business of those times is very interesting. One of the letters at the end of the book is concerned with the slackness of a person named Ginunu who, it seems, has stopped sending bread for the soldiers. No reasons are given; but one can perhaps suppose he was a contractor of the type which has existed at all ages, and doubtless he duly sent in his bills to the head commissariat for the total amount of the bread. The volume as a whole is beautifully published, all the tablets being reproduced in half-tones.

#### Curtis's Botanical Magazine: Index

THE Royal Horticultural Society, London, has rendered a service that plant lovers will appreciate by the publication, under the authorship of F. J. Chittenden, of an index to Vols. 1–164 of *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*. There is also an appendix of the titles and numbers of plants from Vols. 165–170. To quote a comment in the preface: "There is little doubt that a complete set of the Botanical Magazine provides the most comprehensive and probably the most accurate collection of plant-portraits in existence though for convenience and speed of reference there

has long been a need for a consolidated index to the illustrations". This very considerable task has now been completed. A major aim of providing accepted contemporary nomenclature throughout has added much to the value of the volumes that have appeared since the inception of the *Magazine* in 1787. The index and history, amounting to 282 pages, can be obtained from the Royal Horticultural Society, Vincent Square, London, S.W.1; price £2 2s.

#### Chromosome Numbers in *Oxalis*

THE genus *Oxalis*, comprising some eight hundred species, occurs principally in South America and South Africa, though some, such as *O. acetosella*, are cosmopolitan. Chromosome numbers in species of the genus have already been reported on by various investigators. The basic numbers cover a fairly wide range, namely, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11—7 being apparently the commonest. In a contemporary paper on this subject by G. E. Marks (*New Phytol.*, 55, 1, 120; 1956), the chromosome numbers of an additional twenty-six species have been ascertained, sixteen of these being of South African origin. The new data admit of cytological comparisons being made between species from the two major regions. From the total information now available the author concludes that it is possible to separate cytologically the South African from the South American group of species, the former having no variation in chromosome size, little variation in basic chromosome number but a high degree of polyploidy, while the latter group has variability in chromosome size and basic chromosome numbers with relatively little polyploidy. Using this evidence, together with morphological and ecological data, it is postulated that the South African group of *Oxalis* species is a specialized group within the genus.

#### The Manchester Museum

THE report of the Manchester Museum for 1954–55 is a record of quiet but steady progress made in the face of financial stringency. The rising costs of salaries and wages necessitated a restriction of all other expenditure to the lowest possible figures. Notwithstanding such an atmosphere, all departments report progress and much valuable research was carried out and published by the staff. As usual, an impressive series of twenty museum lectures was arranged for Saturday afternoons, with an average attendance throughout the year of sixty-five. At the annual reception the Museum welcomed about three hundred guests, and the idea of showing them special displays of recent acquisitions and illustrating the scientific and technical work done in the Museum is to be commended.

#### Commonwealth Fund Fellowships

THE Committee of Award of the Commonwealth Fund Fellowships has made the following elections, among others, for 1956–57: *General Fellowships*: H. G. Alexander, Aberdeen, Christ Church, Oxford, and Manchester (philosophy); J. A. Beardmore, Sheffield (genetics); J. S. Cumpsty, Durham (mining); Miss Marion Fairman, Durham and Glasgow (bacteriology); W. Galbraith, Birkbeck College, London (physics); Miss Janet Graham, St. Andrews (botany); N. Macleod, Imperial College, London, and Leicester (chemistry); J. McDaniel, Imperial College, London (engineering); J. N. Murrell, King's College, London, and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (physics); H. M. A. Onitiri, London School