

cellence of his work, without which the plates would be of much less value.

FREDERICK H. GETMAN

Historical Papers on Modern Explosives.

By GEORGE W. MACDONALD. Whittaker & Co., N. Y. 1912. Pp. 192. \$2.50 net.

When the age of the world as fixed by the most recent observers, such as Becker and Clarke, the probable length of time it has been inhabited by man, and the important part which chemistry played, both in the creation of the earth and of its inhabitants, is considered, it is an amazing thing that man was so very slow in assembling a systematized knowledge of chemistry and especially slow in recognizing those compounds which are reservoirs of energy, for though compounds of this kind, such as the nitrosubstitution compound, picric acid, discovered by Hausmann in 1788, were described in the latter part of the eighteenth century, it was not until the opening year of the nineteenth century, in which Howard discovered mercuric fulminate and demonstrated its properties, that man apparently began to realize that energy could be stored up in individual compound molecules which was ready for release at command, so that it might be employed like the bent bow, the coiled spring, the head of water, the wind, or the energy of man or animals applied through the many mechanical devices then invented, or mixtures of substances, such as gunpowders, to do work.

This new conception of a capacity with which compound molecules might be endowed was, in the middle of the nineteenth century, reinforced by Schönbein's discovery of cellulose nitrates and Sobrero's discovery of glyceryl nitrates; and the discovery and recognition of the value of molecules so constituted to mankind in the accomplishment of work has gone on with continued acceleration ever since, for masses of the mercuric fulminate, cellulose nitrates, glyceryl nitrates, alone or compounded into mixtures such as the many dynamites, smokeless powders and permissible explosives, have been put to do work in engineering projects and in military operations,

and they have, when wisely used, materially increased the resources of man in his contest with the material world in which he is placed and environed.

The period covered by MacDonald in the book under review is from 1800 to 1887 and it deals with the discovery and development of the three explosives last enumerated. This was a period of marked scientific and technical activity with regards to these bodies and much was published regarding them in widely scattered publications, some of which are now difficult of access, and because of this, and further because the earliest literature "often contains observations and experiments which are generally considered to be the results of much later investigation" the author has brought them together here after having published them as separate articles in *Arms and Explosives*.

Mr. MacDonald has not given reprints but rather condensed résumés in which he has divided single articles into several smaller ones and introduced comments of his own. Further he has drawn his material from patent literature and unpublished correspondence as well as from scientific journals, and recast or "reduced tabulated results to statements of fact." It will be seen therefore that the book is not authoritative, even to the extent that carefully supervised reprints would be, and that its usefulness is limited.

There appears a lack of proportion in the treatment since 149 out of the 192 pages are devoted to gun cotton and 98 of these to Abel's work leaving Schönbein the discoverer, and von Lenk, whose pioneer work in Austria was presented freely and in detail to the Committee of the British Association, quite in the background. In fact there is a distinctly British tendency permeating the book.

CHARLES E. MUNROE

Insect Pests of the Farm, Garden and Orchard. By E. DWIGHT SANDERSON. New York, John Wiley & Sons. 1912. \$3.00.

The author explains in the preface how his attempt to revise his former book "Insects Injurious to Staple Crops" finally resulted in

extending its scope and practically rewriting it, until the present volume came out of it. Entomologists, orchardists, farmers and teachers are all indebted to Professor Sanderson for bringing together the scattered up-to-date information presented in this book. Many control methods and remedies recommended in previous works have recently been superseded and are therefore out of date.

The subject matter of the volume in question is well presented, and the illustrations for the most part are satisfactory, though one questions if it is not better to use photographs entirely of spraying apparatus rather than the trade cuts from manufacturers' catalogues. Some other ancient cuts have also been used which do not add to the usefulness or attractiveness of the volume. Most of the illustrations are excellent, a goodly number are original, and many have appeared before in entomological journals and experiment station bulletins, due credit being given. It is perhaps impossible to prepare and print a work of this magnitude without finding some errors in it, but the errors in this volume are mostly typographical, and can easily be corrected in future editions. A few of the illustrations are badly printed, but in most respects the mechanical production of the book leaves nothing to be desired.

The work should supply a distinct need, and ought to be placed on the shelves of all libraries.

W. E. BRITTON

TERMS USED TO DENOTE THE ABUNDANCE OR RARITY OF BIRDS

WHEN reading lists of birds, which indicate their abundance or rarity, it is often very difficult to tell just how common or how rare a bird is, for it is seldom that any two people use the same scale of terms. In fact few have any definitely graded scale, most preferring to write them as they are needed, and consequently, without realizing, they have a long illogical list of terms. Those most frequently adopted are given below. I have limited myself to eight, which are: abundant, common, frequent, uncommon, occasional, rare, scarce

and irregular. Together with other terms that are used I have given my reasons for not using them. Those which I have selected have been proposed chiefly, and all agreed to by Mr. C. William Beebe.

Abundant.

Very Common is the same as Abundant, for Abundant means More Common than Common.

Common.

Plentiful means the same as Abundant or Common.

Usually Common or Usually Rare are the same as Common or Rare, for we are writing about what the bird usually is, so Usually may be omitted.

Quite Common. The real meaning of Quite is "completely" or "wholly." It is wrongly used to indicate "to a considerable extent." Thus Quite Common, correctly used, means no more than Completely Common, or simply Common.

Not Uncommon is equal to Common.

Tolerably Common is usually used to mean Fairly Common, but thus used it is a very meaningless word, as tolerably means that which can be endured. If one wishes to use it as meaning Fairly Common, he can just as well use the latter word or, instead of these, Frequent.

Frequent.

Often Seen is the same as Frequent.

Usually Tolerably Common is the same as Tolerably Common, which is the same as Frequent. Fairly Plentiful is the same as Fairly Common. Fairly Common is the same as Frequent.

Uncommon.

Infrequent is the same as Uncommon or Occasional.

Not Common is Uncommon.

Occasional.

Sometimes Seen is Occasional.

Accidental is Occasional or Rare.

Rare.

Very Rare is using an unnecessary adverb, for Rare is Very Rare, and to use the latter, only makes a list more confusing and difficult to understand.

Scarce.

Scarce does not mean the same as Rare, but indicates that the bird mentioned was at some previous time Common, but that it has since decreased in numbers until it is now Rare.

Very Scarce means Scarce (Very is unnecessary).