Book Reviews

Bernhard Eduard Fernow: A Story of North American Forestry. Andrew Denny Rodgers III. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1951. 623 pp. $7.50.

In completeness of coverage, fidelity to facts, and freedom from bias, this volume should rank as the most comprehensive and trustworthy history of the origin and development of forestry in the U. S. and Canada that has yet appeared. The author has made a thorough examination of all published records and has supplemented these data drawn from extensive private correspondence and personal interviews. In a careful reading of the text, based on personal knowledge covering fifty years, the reviewer has not discovered any inaccuracies.

Bernhard Eduard Fernow, as the record shows, was truly the founder of the profession of forestry in America—despite the fact that Gifford Pinchot, his successor as head of what was then the U. S. Bureau of Forestry, building on the foundations Fernow had laid, was able to realize the aims of his predecessor. With the support of President Theodore Roosevelt, Pinchot established and greatly expanded the national forest areas and policy for which Fernow was responsible.

The practice of forestry as a science and an art was unknown in America when Fernow first visited this country in 1876 to attend the Philadelphia Centennial Celebration. Remaining here, he later married the American girl who was the real reason for his transfer of citizenship. A Prussian of the old school, he had received a complete education and training in the science of forestry in his native land. With this equipment he combined keen intelligence, great versatility, enormous energy, and the culture and instincts of a gentleman and a true scientist.

Fernow was appointed chief of the Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture in 1886—his first salaried position in forestry—after a decade of employment in other fields and of active public work for a sound national forest policy. By June 4, 1897, his plan for national forests had been adopted by Congress and a sound administrative act passed and, with Filibert Roth, he had founded the science of timber physics.

Not by nature politically minded, Fernow in 1898 resigned to found the first professional college of forestry in the U. S. at Cornell University, to prepare students for the practice of this art, then for the first time promising employment to trained men. His later misfortune, brought about by his belief that plantations of conifers should supersede Adirondack hardwoods, which led to temporary discontinuance of the school in 1903, is ably and fully covered and should be accepted as the last word on this controversy.

After a year of substituting at the Yale School of Forestry in the absence of Henry S. Graves in the Philippines, Fernow initiated the College of Forestry at Penn State, in 1905, but in 1906 he was called upon to found the College of Forestry at the University of Toronto—where he remained until his death in 1923. His influence on Canadian forestry was as far-reaching and profound as had been his initial efforts here.

This text is far more than a life of Dr. Fernow. Literally hundreds of persons are mentioned, with the part they played in forest history. All important events in the development of forest policy and practice are accurately dealt with, from the early beginnings of the movement in the 1870s until 1923, when Fernow's participation was terminated by his death.

"To be first in the field in point of time, and to continue to be first in the field in point of quality, is one of the rarest things in this world" sums up Dr. Fernow's career in the words of President Livingston Farrand, of Cornell University, at the dedication of Fernow Hall in 1922.

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Progress in the Chemistry of Organic Natural Products, Vols. VI and VII. L. Zechmeister, Ed. Vienna: Springer-Verlag, 1950; distributed by Walter J. Johnson, New York. Vol. VI: 392 pp.; $12.50 paper, $13.50 cloth. Vol. VII: 330 pp.; $12.00 paper, $12.80 cloth.

It is difficult for a modern chemist to conceive that there was a time, almost within the memory of living men, when a person could know all the important discoveries of organic chemistry. As our science broadens, the task of organization and assimilation continually becomes more complex, and the need for books such as these is felt more keenly. This reviewer is once more impressed by the high scholarship and clear expression of the authors and the intrinsic interest of the subject matter. The work of typesetting and proofreading is beyond praise when the trilingual (English, German, French) nature of the books is considered.

Volume VI deals with "Biochemical and Nutritional Aspects in Fat Chemistry," by H. J. Deuel, Jr., and S. M. Greenberg; "Animal Odors and Perfumes," written in French by E. Lederer; "Occurrence and Biochemical Behavior of Quinones," written in German by O. Hoffman-Ostenhof; "Cactus Alkaloids and Some Related Compounds," by L. Reti; "Plant Proteins," by James Bonner; and "Spectrochemistry of Fluorescence of Biological Products," written in French by Ch. Dhéré.

Volume VII discusses "The Constitution of the Triterpenes," written in German by O. Jeger; "Constitution, Configuration and Synthesis of Digitaloid Aglycones and Glycosides," in German, by H. Heusser; "Thyroxine and Related Compounds," by C. Niemann; "Penicillin and its Place in Science," by A. H. Cook; "The Active Principles of Senna," by A.