tain the desired humidity in the moist chamber, and the yarn may be reused after sterilization.

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Dissa and Data

FOR nearly 20 years I have recommended to students my opinion that (1) the word "data" should be related to a plural verb form, as "the data are;" and that (2) the word "disinterested" means impartial or unbiased.

If recent publications are evidence of common usage, "data" can be used with either singular or plural verb form. It appears that this is a result of "growing pains" of our language. Are we all agreed to accept?

"Disinterested" has been often used recently in place of "uninterested." To this I object—probably ineffectually. "Disinterested" was a useful word, and I do not like losing it.

Shall I continue my former practices of instruction, or shall I stop being a bigot and forget?

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EDITORIAL NOTE: *The editors subscribe to Dr. Warren's bigotry and will continue to correct these errors whenever they are made in manuscripts. They also object to the use of "presently" for "now," and "while" for "whereas" or "although." They are also disturbed because of (not "due to") the adverbial misuse of the adjectival expression "due to."*

Book Reviews

Taxonomy of Vascular Plants. George H. M. Lawrence. New York: Macmillan, 1951. 823 pp. $7.95.

Modern botanical research has repeatedly substantiated the old taxonomic practice of treating the vascular plants as a major unit. Although many manuals and floras contain descriptions of all vascular plants found in a given area, they are rarely treated together in textbooks of systematic botany. Actually, *Taxonomy of Vascular Plants* is the first modern textbook of this kind and is eloquent testimony of the present tendency toward dealing with all vascular plants under the name Tracheophyta. Yet the author deliberately adopted the last published version (1936) of the widely used Engler system of classification, with its obvious shortcomings, as the basis for the systematic section of the book (Part II, pp. 333–72), because it is still the most carefully elaborated system available.

Other conspicuous changes in comparison with existing texts of systematic botany are seen in the elimination of all floral diagrams and formulas, the replacement of chapters dealing with the organography of vascular plants by an illustrated glossary of taxonomic terms (Appendix II, pp. 737–75), the introduction and consistent use of the term "taxon" (taxa), and the consolidation in Part I (pp. 1–331) of 14 chapters on "Principles and Practices of Plant Taxonomy." Appendix I (pp. 733–36) represents a "Suggested Syllabus for an Elementary Course in Taxonomy" for those who wish to use the book as a text in a one-term course. This syllabus proves that it is much more than an elementary textbook in both scope and contents. Thus it is not only the most inclusive textbook of systematic botany in English (or any other language) but also a convenient and indispensable reference work for the advanced student. The latter will find in it well-balanced discussions of all major controversial aspects of phylogeny, along with informative chapters on field and herbarium techniques and other important principles and practices of taxonomy currently in use. The same is true of the systematic part with its enumeration of 264 families of vascular plants "known to grow as indigens or exotics in North America north of Mexico." The account of each family includes a technical description, enumeration of important genera, distributional data, discussion of morphological characteristics and assumed phylogenetic relationships, key references, and representative figures, many from L. H. Bailey's *Manual of Cultivated Plants* (1949). Completely extinct groups like the Pteridospermae are excluded.

A few interesting details may be singled out for comment. Under Ginkgoaceae five of the seven references deal with the spelling of the generic name *Ginkgo,* which should be corrected to *Ginkyo*. The future alone will tell how soon and how widely this spelling will be accepted. It is regrettable, however, that so much attention is being given to a problem of nomenclature when this important taxon is in such dire need of a synoptic treatment of its fossil forms. The recently proposed family Sarcopodaceae, here provisionally listed under the Gnetales (p. 368), has been rescinded, now that the genus *Sarcopus* has been identified with *Exocarpus* (Santalaceae). The Compositae are regarded as the largest family, with 950 genera and 20,000 species, thus rivaling or exceeding the Orchidaceae, here credited with 450 genera and 10,000–15,000 species, but considered to be the largest family by other authorities. Most likely, both families are larger than the remainder, containing numerous species, many of which may prove to be referable to others once critical studies of large genera are carried out.