

REVIEWS.

The Botanical Names of the Flora of New Zealand.—By A. Wall and H. H. Allan. pp. 88—paper covers—published by Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., Wellington (1945). Price 4/6.

This new and welcome publication gives, as it states in its subtitle, the "origin, history and meaning" of the botanical name of many indigenous phanerogams and ferns together with "hints on pronunciation." This last phrase is rather too modest. The authors give in remarkably small compass in the introduction, very sound *rules* for the pronunciation, or at least for the accentuation of all botanical names: but with a scholarly appreciation of the point that plant names, even in the Latin form, are part of the living speech, they refuse to be dogmatic enough to bar custom-justified pronunciations and conventions. It would be well if all readers would construe their modest hints as inviolable rules, and pay careful heed thereto. Botanists' handling of plant names might then cease to resemble the racecourse cacophonies that pass muster for equine nomenclatures from the classics.

The introduction covers eight pages only: and there are few groups of eight consecutive pages in the Dominion's botanical literature that will better repay close study. It is very doubtful if any better example could be found of scholarship without pedantry.

The main body of the book is a small lexicon of family, generic, specific and varietal names. Being a lexicon, it is in alphabetical order, and in each word explained the accented syllable is clearly shown. Literal meaning is then given, followed where necessary by the philology. Then follows a short note stating clearly (where this is known) what the original nomenclator had in mind when adopting the particular epithet for cases where its application is not self evident to those who know the plants in question. Where this information is not known, the text states that fact clearly, or in other cases, states that the interpretation given is either traditional or purely conjectural.

The pronunciation portion of the text provides few surprises. Conventional botanical pronunciation locally appears to be surprisingly orthodox: and where it is not so, presumably custom will continue to take precedence over orthodoxy. Few would care to have the philologically correct *Anemóne* replace the old familiar *Anémone*: but it would probably be all to the good if the more correct *Nothópanax* did replace the usual *Nothopánax*.

The philological analysis particularly of specific names, involving as it does, not only derivations from classical languages, but research into original botanical descriptions to ascertain the interpretation (often very fanciful) which the original author attributed to the classical word he chose to select as a plant name, is by far the most interesting part of the book. Here even the most assiduous student

is certain to find something, if not much, that is new. The more usual average of readers will find new material on every page. The reviewer, for example, had long wondered what any *Olearia* could possibly have had to do with frogs. Without this booklet, he would probably have continued to wonder to his dying day. The explanation is that the specific name *Rani* is a mutilation of the Maori word *Wharangi*, although admittedly the capital R should give more careful students a clue to the fact that a native vernacular name might be involved. The mutilation, however, is so extravagant that the connection could hardly be guessed, specially in view of the fact that modern Maori lexicons show no authority for calling this particular *Olearia* "Wharangi." So too with the generic *Mida* from the Maori *Maire*.

Despite the scholarship and care of the authors, an occasional error seems to have crept in. The reviewer, somewhat mistrustful of his own temerity, ventures to suggest that the note on *Scutellaria* needs revision. The classical Latin diminutive of *scutum* is *scutulum*; the modernised Latin diminutive (according to the Oxford Dictionary) is *scutellum*. The word *scutella* which is quoted as the origin of this generic name is a diminutive of *scutra*—a platter, not of *scutum*—a shield. He would similarly venture to question the derivation given for *sanguinolentus*. In his opinion, Linnaeus, in condemning this word as a specific name (see p. 5), would have raised a colour bar only, not a scent bar.

Nor is it easy to agree that the name *Pteris comans* seems "singularly inapplicable" (p.25). On the contrary, the specific epithet seems to the reviewer to be beautifully appropriate to this particular bracken, if the Vergilian meaning of "leafy" or "luxuriant" is remembered.

These critical remarks are made principally with the hope that these small points will be amended in the second edition, to which the work will surely run in a very short period; and one may at the same time express the further hope that the second edition will be enlarged to give even more philological detail. Meantime, the first edition should be in the reference library of every N.Z. forester.

C.M.S.

Forest Tree Breeding and Genetics.—By R. H. Richens, M.A. Imperial Agricultural Bureaux, Joint Publication No. 8. pp. 79, paper covers. Nov., 1945. 5/-.

As its preface explains, the aim of this bulletin is to collate the literature on forest tree breeding that has appeared since 1930, much of which has been published in comparatively inaccessible German, Russian and Swedish forestry journals, so that it has become increasingly difficult for research workers to keep abreast with modern developments. An extensive bibliography is given, and also a glossary of technical terms; this latter feature is essential for any non-