

Witchcraft Today

By Gerald B. Gardner. Pp. 163+4 plates. (London: Rider and Company, 1954.) 12s. 6d. net.

THIS interesting and unusual book appears to be the first of its kind. Written by Dr. G. B. Gardner, the director of the Museum of Magic and Witchcraft in the Isle of Man and a member of one of the few covens of the witch cult left in Britain, it sets out to describe how the practices of modern witchcraft are connected with the ancient rites and how they may be compared with the revelations concerning them which were brought to light in the witchcraft trials. Dr. Gardner writes with a disarming simplicity. He shows himself perfectly aware of the difficulties, the contradictions and the apparent absurdities of witchcraft as it is generally understood. Yet, as Dr. Margaret Murray indicates in her admirable introduction to the book, much remains of great interest and psychological importance. The rhythmic movements and chants in which numbers of persons take part induce both exhilaration and at times even a kind of intoxication, during which gratitude is extended to the Creator for his goodness and hope is expressed for its continuance.

Far from deriding the existence of the witch 'power', Dr. Gardner is at pains to link it up with what is known about suggestion, extra-sensory perception and even radiesthesia. In the course of his discussion he shows clearly where the pitfalls lie and, while expressing his own tentative views on these controversial matters, never irritates the reader by propaganda designed to convert him to unreasoning belief. The book is well produced with a useful list of references; but unfortunately there is no index. It is to be recommended to all who wish to learn something of the meaning of witchcraft as it is to be understood to-day and interpreted through the help of modern followers of the cult. E. J. DINGWALL

Encyclopedia of Chemical Reactions

Compiled and edited by C. A. Jacobson, with the assistance of Clifford A. Hampel and Elbert C. Weaver. Vol. 5: Nickel, Niobium, Nitrogen, Osmium, Oxygen, Palladium, Phosphorus, Platinum, Potassium, Praseodymium, Radium, Rhenium, Rhodium, Rubidium, Ruthenium. Pp. viii+787. (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation; London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1953.) 120s. net.

THE fifth volume of this encyclopædia follows the same pattern as that of previous volumes. It covers, in alphabetical order, all the elements from nickel to ruthenium excepting protoactinium and radon. Actually, only a few reactions are listed for radium, rhenium and niobium. The inclusion of niobium seems unfortunate considering that a larger number of its reactions have already been listed under columbium. Like some of the earlier volumes, the present one gives the same impression of untidy carelessness and poor editing. For example, the few reactions given under rhenium are all taken from a published lecture and no reference is made to the actual discoverers of the reactions; the impression is therefore given that the lecturer is the originator of the reactions. There is also some carelessness in regard to nomenclature, as, for example, when $(\text{PNCl}_2)_3$ in one abstract is called phosphorus chloronitride, while in the next it is phosphorus dichloride nitride; $(\text{PNCl}_2)_4$ is given the more workman-like name of tetraphosphonitrilic chloride. In addition, there are a number of printing errors.

Although this encyclopædia is extremely useful, one does feel that its value would have been greater if, instead of the haphazard abstraction of chemical reactions from any journal which happened to be handy, a directed and determined effort had been made to provide a reasonably complete list of the reactions of the various elements.

G. R. DAVIES

Metallurgical Abstracts

General and Non-Ferrous. Volume 20, 1952-53 (New Series). Edited by N. B. Vaughan. Pp. iv+602. (London: Institute of Metals, 1953.) 60s.

THE service offered by the well-known "Metallurgical Abstracts" is outstanding. For a modest sum a bird's-eye view, as it were, of world progress in a large part of metallurgical science and practice is provided. The specific scope cannot be defined with precision in a few words, but broadly it consists of the general theory of the metallic state, and the science and practice of non-ferrous metallurgy (excluding mining and extraction), together with many associated subjects.

The abstracts are informative rather than merely indicative, which is a great advantage especially with foreign publications, although it naturally involves a greater delay in publication than with the indicative kind. The reviewer can testify, from personal use, to the general reliability of the abstracting. There are twenty-three subject headings, and this is generally satisfactory, except for physical metallurgy, the bulk of which subject is found under three headings; these are too few, and considerable work could be avoided for users if more subdivision were used. The matter is presented in good print on very suitable paper, and is thoroughly indexed with respect to names and subjects. A. R. BAILEY

Exercises in Theoretical Statistics

With Answers and Hints on Solutions. By Prof. M. G. Kendall. (London: Charles Griffin and Co., Ltd., 1954.) 20s.

THIS collection contains four hundred exercises, taken mainly from examination papers and research journals, and it represents yet another example of the prodigious labours of Prof. M. G. Kendall, for which statisticians have already much reason to be grateful. He has not attempted to cover all the applications of statistics, but has concentrated on basic theory, dividing the exercises into five groups, namely, distribution theory (100 exercises), sampling theory (100), relationship (75), estimation and inference (75) and times series (50). Not all will agree with the classification he has employed; in particular, the line of demarcation between the first two groups is rather indefinite, while exercises on the evaluation of moments appear in all groups. Because of the close integration between courses of lectures and the examination questions to which they lead, published examination papers tend to look even harder to others than they did to their intended recipients. Thus, the student working on his own would gain little help from standard texts in attempting, for example, the elegant series of problems on the theory of queues for which Cambridge 1948 was such a vintage year. Prof. Kendall has now largely overcome this difficulty by the outline solutions at the end of the book, which make it invaluable to student and teacher alike.

R. L. PLACKETT