



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN



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structural relationships in wood and cellulosic materials. However, much of the analysis appears to be based on rather limited data and further study will be required to evaluate the possibilities proposed. The author gives the impression that he is continuing the work. His book will be of interest to botanists, chemists, physicists, engineers, or wood technologists concerned with piezoelectric effects in plant tissue, with structure of wood, cellulose, and cellulosic materials, and with the relationship of structure to physical behavior.

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Witch Doctor's Apprentice. Nicole Maxwell. 353 pp. illus. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1961. \$5.00.

To some, it may seem strange that a scientist reviews this book in a scientific journal, for it is clearly a book by an amateur for amateur readers. And, in view of some of the adverse reviews—one of them petulantly puerile—by self-styled experts in exploration, it may seem stranger that a scientist should review Maxwell's book favourably. As an explorer of the region where Maxwell travelled, I found the book delightful and refreshing. It brought back nostalgic memories in a truer perspective than I could ever have rendered them into words.

My only pretext for reviewing the book at all is that I have worked, during a part of my 12-year stay in the Amazon, on some of the very same rivers which Maxwell describes. Furthermore, I was engaged there in part in precisely the same occupation that took Mrs. Maxwell to the western Amazon—the search for new drug plants. I believe that I am, therefore, in a position to report that *Witch Doctor's Apprentice* is outstanding in its humbleness, its unassuming awe of the tropics, and its honesty. Its main purpose, beyond wholesome entertainment, will be to bring to the singularly uninformed American public some idea of the reservoir of medical lore still unstudied in the world's hinterlands.

Why should the American public have to get this enlightenment from the hands of one who has never claimed to be anything else than an amateur? The answer is that, in

great part, we scientists are not sharing our work and experience along these lines with the reading public—either because we cannot write popularly, have not time to do it, or, unfortunately in some cases, disdain to do it. Since these conditions do exist, I consider that Nicole Maxwell, with all the shortcomings that such a book must inevitably have for the specialist, has done both the scientist and the layman a favour.

One may justifiably criticize Mrs. Maxwell's title, since she obviously never served as the apprentice of a witch doctor. But, then, as in the case of the poet, some license must be granted the title of a book, and this title certainly sets the tone for the book.

Nicole Maxwell went into the forests of the western Amazon in that area where the boundaries of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru come together. She financed her ten-month trip with a small grant from a pharmaceutical firm and a good dose of courage. For, though the dangers and discomforts of the Amazon are, usually for purposes of self-glorification, extraordinarily exaggerated by the modern rash of "explorers", it nevertheless must have taken not a little grit for a middle-aged woman, used to the amenities of an American metropolis, to go into the Witoto Indian country. Ever conscious of her lack of technical preparation for the work at hand, she seems to have kept to her purpose in an uncommonly well oriented way. The book is mainly an account of her experiences and thoughts while searching for plant remedies which the Indians employ to loosen and extract teeth, as contraceptives, as internal hemostatics, to lighten the after-effects of alcoholic intoxication, to control weight, etc. It is true that Mrs. Maxwell fails to discuss in technical detail the plant-medicines themselves, but those of us who have been engaged in such quests realize that perhaps the less said about them the better until laboratory corroboration of native uses is forthcoming—often a matter of many months or years of study.

We who have been trained scientifically to do this type of work and who have often had at our disposal more funds and longer periods of time will certainly read Mrs. Maxwell's book with respect. We are ever aware of what the technical man owes in this kind of work to the amateur. *Witch Doctor's Ap-*

prentice will take its place in libraries, as it has on my own shelf of Amazon botanical and exploration literature, as a refreshing breather in an era of overtechnical books on exploration on the one hand and superficial froth on the other.

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Plant Hunters in the Andes. T. Harper Goodspeed. 2nd ed., revised and enlarged. 378 pp. illus. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961. \$7.50.

It is not uncommon for a successful book of travel or exploration to experience more than one edition. I think that it is uncommon, however, to find the second edition of such a thoroughly delightful book as Goodspeed's *Plant Hunters in the Andes* to be so superior to the earlier edition. This is true, primarily because the 20 years between the two editions were for the author a period of continued and intensified field activity.

The first edition, published in 1941, was based on Goodspeed's first two expeditions to the central Andes, whereas the present edition, reporting on four additional expeditions, has a greatly enlarged horizon extending from Colombia in the north to Cape Horn in the south, west to the Juan Fernandez Islands, and east into Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Argentine, a truly extraordinary range for this kind of meticulous plant exploration.

Goodspeed's authoritative work on *Nicotiana*, summarized in masterly fashion in his book *The genus Nicotiana*, constitutes one of the great botanical achievements of the present century. It could have been done only on the basis of the persistent field work of the six University of California Botanical Garden expeditions to South America, directed and organized by Dr. Goodspeed. But his interests far transcend the one genus he was working on and include all phanerogams, with special interest in the orchids. Yet, one can discover more in the pages of this new edition. One can see "how the human interest that motivated and guided Goodspeed and his collaborators helped to crown the scientific goals of the work with success." Most of the material of the original edition

is included in the second, but a number of chapters, naturally, are entirely new, and the many additional photographs go far towards enriching the newer contribution. The whole serves to complete the record of more than a quarter of a century of plant exploration. Interesting references to plant uses are scattered freely throughout the narrative. The personal touch is never lost, whether the author be discussing a new *Nicotiana*, describing botanical friends and collaborators, or interjecting frank observations on social and political characteristics of the countries and regions visited. This is refreshing today when the honest custom of writing one's frank views has all but disappeared. It has truly been said of Goodspeed's writing: "The story is as rich with rareness as many of the plants the teller discovered."

Though I was thoroughly familiar with Goodspeed's earlier edition, I found it difficult to set the new edition aside once I had started to read it. I predict that it will not be long before it is translated into Spanish, as was the first edition, and that it will take a high place amongst the outstanding books of travel which botany has produced. It should be on the bookshelf of every naturalist interested in Latin America and of many others.

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Mushrooms and Truffles: Botany, Cultivation and Utilization. Rolf Singer. 272 pp. illus. Interscience Publishers, Inc., New York. 1962. \$10.25

Records of the earliest civilizations testify to the fact that man has been a mycophagous creature for millenia. But until quite recently, his activities in this direction were concerned only with his individual needs, desires, or whims and have therefore been sporadic and unorganized. For example, the purposeful cultivation of the mushroom *Agaricus bisporus* for human consumption (now a 50 million dollar industry in the United States) was an innovation of French gardeners about the year 1700, while the culture of the famed Périgord Truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*), although less impressive as an economic crop (but often selling at more than \$10 a pound when available in fresh