

THE STORY OF OUR TREES

H. M. FitzPatrick, on behalf of "Trees for Ireland". Published by David and Ann Luke. 80 pages. Black and white photographs. Soft back. £2.50 including postage.

In a year that saw the advent of School Forest Week, which introduced some 24,000 children between the ages of nine and twelve to an understanding of woodland plants, it is appropriate that this first-rate little book should appear. Suitable for everyone from this age group upwards, it traces the history of our trees from the Ice Age to this century, follows this with the series of excellent drawings of trees by Rosaline Murphy and then describes our forests today.

Starting with the trees that spread here after the disappearance of the ice (should the Black Poplar mentioned, really be Aspen?), the effect that successive generations of man had on the woods is told. The gradual clearance of the forest, which accelerated during the 17th century and the subsequent introduction to estates of foreign European species, are covered. The involvement of the state in afforestation at the beginning of this century and the planting of species from western North America, are described.

The drawings of trees include the twenty-six most common species in Ireland. Besides the outline of each mature tree is a drawing of its leaves, twig, and fruit. The name is given in Irish and English, accompanied by a brief note on the species, and its uses.

The acquisition of land for forests is explained, ranging from old estates to hill farms, with examples being given. Following this are descriptions of some of our better known forests and the principal tree species growing in them. The work of forest nurseries is covered and the life of the tree depicted. Places where trees may be found are included together with the species growing on the various land types mentioned. There is an absorbing chapter on wildlife in the woods. The value of the forest for leisure and education is stressed and there is a brief account of the use of timber. Finally, there are suggestions for projects on trees and arbor days.

This is a well laid-out and very readable book which should be on every school curriculum. It should also be ideal for park shops and similar outlets, both for its price and size. It is light enough to fit the pocket easily and yet substantial enough not to be mislaid. In fact, no family should be without one.

C. P. Kelly.