BOOK REVIEWS


We all remember how Toomai watched the elephants dancing at night in the heart of the Garo hills, but many of us will be surprised to learn that bees also can dance. The ballet which they stage to put their fellow-foragers on the right road to the nectar is one of the many beautiful things told by Sir Stewart. This is the best of his books so far, and its appeal will be even wider than that of his great seven-volume "Text-Book of Ophthalmology". Every ophthalmologist ought to read "The Eye in Evolution", but its subject-matter and mode of presentation will also attract chemists, biologists, comparative anatomists, physicists, and a multitude of other medical people besides those who practise ophthalmology. Nearly every page is beset with judiciously chosen, skilfully arranged illustrations, the coloured plates are splendid, and Miss Soley's gay marginal sketches help to rivet the reader's attention. Each paragraph has been combed by the proof-readers, and I have never seen a book on this scale so refreshingly free from misprints. All the material is tellingly spaced, finely printed on high-grade paper, and set off by a good binding. The firm of Henry Kimpton, and Mr. George Deed in particular, have good reason to be proud of their production.

Even outside the ranks of medical and scientific workers there must be many people who will enjoy reading about the navigational achievement of those birds who

"...wedge their way,
"Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
"Thir Aerie Caravan high over Seas
"Flying ..."

They will also be excited to hear of that resourceful crustacean, *Talitrus saltator*, who can navigate at night by the light of the moon. The general reader requires no special knowledge of science or medicine to initiate him into the manoeuvres of a male praying mantis paying court to his spouse. His are the stratagems which remind Sir Stewart of children playing at Grandmother's Footsteps. Many problems of perception, phototropism, and morphology were considered in the earlier editions of Sir Stewart's "Recent Advances in Ophthalmology" some 30 years ago, in the first volume of his text-book (1932), and more recently in the Lister Oration which he delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons of England in March, 1958; but here we see him in full sail, expanding his theme with space for deployment. The subject matter, as he justly claims in the preface, has never before been gathered into a single book. Instances of masterly description could easily be multiplied to tempt a prospective reader. Neurobiotaxis, bioluminescence, the functions of the pecten and the tapetum, the bellicosity of ants, the cormorant's accommodative excursion, and the role of tears as a food-lubricator in certain animals, are all effectively considered. So are the astonishing morphological variations of the cornea, retina, lens, and ocular musculature among the species which dwell upon our planet. Another charming feature of Sir Stewart's book is the series of tributes which he pays to the work of Darwin, Müller, Hesse, Kappers, Lankester, and other pioneers in this enormous field of investigation.
BOOK REVIEWS

“It will be remembered”, says Sir Stewart at the beginning of more than one sentence, and then goes on to produce some delightfully recondite piece of information. So modestly is the story set forth that many a reader is lulled into supposing that he knows it already. That is all to the good. Familiar things, even if the familiarity is more apparent than real, keep us reading. Although this is a large volume, it should not be treated as a work of reference. By all means use it as a reference book afterwards, but first of all read it right through. Every chapter is worth while, nor should the reader forget that many a gem nestles unobtrusively among the sections printed in smaller type. Sir Stewart has proclaimed his indebtedness to many helpers for technical, secretarial, and other forms of assistance. He also knows how much of the credit belongs to his forerunners in scientific research. Nevertheless, we must insist that no mere drone could have compiled anything to compare with “The Eye in Evolution”. Prodigious industry was of course needed to cope with the mass of material which Sir Stewart has coaxed into shape. In the wee sma’ hours, when most of us have been swathed in oblivion, his pen has gone racing over the paper, as light and nimble as the fireflies which he describes with so much gusto (p. 742). Sir Stewart tells us that the kingfisher is endowed with four foveae, but he himself, although he is limited to a pair, surveys the face of Nature as if his foveae out-numbered a butterfly’s ommatidia. He has assembled his facts with discrimination, and linked them with a grasp that may justly be termed Churchillian. Therefore the reviewer’s task has been converted into a pleasure tempered by only one regret—that Sir Stewart’s beloved chief John Herbert Parsons did not live quite long enough to see the work in print. It is difficult to conceive how any other book could so conclusively prove that we are, in the words of the Psalmist, “fearfully and wonderfully made”.


This little pamphlet, based on the experiences of the pleoptic and orthoptic school at St. Gallen, is intended to be a “hand-out” to parents of children suffering from amblyopia ex anopsia. Appropriate methods of treatment depending upon the age of the patient are given on folding pages of different colour including illustrations of certain home-work exercises.

Although some of the methods of treatment advocated are not quite in accordance with British custom, a pamphlet of this sort is a good idea, and of considerable practical value.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The following will be reviewed in Ophthalmic Literature, Vol. 12, No. 3, March (1959):


