

ancestor, and just as provocative. Some disappointment may be felt at Dr. de Beer's failure to consider some aspects of the problem in greater detail than he has done. The most striking instance of neotony which is usually emphasized is the view that man became differentiated from his fellow primates by a process of foetilization, and it is this example of neotony which Dr. de Beer describes most fully. His arguments are the same as those which he presented in 1930, and are derived in the main from Bolk. Unfortunately Bolk's views on this subject scarcely stand up to close examination. It may be possible to recognize a process of neotony or foetilization in human development if we are not too critical

about the choice of the details of the developmental processes which form a basis of comparison between the development of man and that of non-human primates. It is, however, certainly impossible within the limits of the order of mammals to which man belongs to recognize an orderly process of increasing foetilization.

While Dr. de Beer's lack of reference to such shortcomings of the general principles he discusses may be regretted, there can be no doubt that he has put the central issues of the general relation of ontogeny and phylogeny clearly and vigorously. His book will with little doubt influence a coming generation of biologists no less than did his earlier essay.

S. ZUCKERMAN.

A NATURALIST IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Birds of the Grey Wind

By Edward A. Armstrong. Pp. xv+228+32 plates. (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1940.) 12s. 6d. net.

IT is said that no Nature book can be successful nowadays unless its illustrations are good. "Birds of the Grey Wind" has a number of really excellent photographs. That of the fulmar in flight is outstanding, but almost as good are those depicting peregrine and sparrow hawk, sandpiper and water ousel. Of special interest is the photograph of a chough feeding her young. This is the first close-up photograph I remember having seen of a chough—a rare bird, nesting in the twilight of caves—and it is perhaps because of under-exposure of the negative that it has been necessary to touch up the bills of the young choughs. There is an unusual illustration showing a mute swan chasing away a Bewick's swan on Lough Neagh.

The book describes mainly the birds of Northern Ireland. There are chapters on Rathlin, Strangford Lough and Lough Neagh; on the heron and cuckoo, red-breasted merganser, swan and cuckoo. Mr. Armstrong writes clearly and sympathetically on the birds of his Irish home. He has spent long days and nights studying them, has watched the herons' flight into their wood above Belfast Lough, mergansers displaying in the sea on a calm November day, tree-creepers roosting in the gnarled bark of some great Wellingtonia, whistling choughs soaring with wide-open primaries above Rathlin, and a young cuckoo (an excellent series of pictures illustrates this) ejecting a hedge sparrow's egg from the nest. He has a leaning for the tales of long ago: Columba awaiting the arrival of the weary

crane from Eire upon his spray-drenched island of Iona; Saint Patrick landing to preach the faith at Strangford Lough—surely Lough Cuan, the old name of that lough, signifies Lough of the Sea, and not, as Mr. Armstrong says, Harbour Lake!—and the fate of the Children of Ler who were compelled to ride the stormy sea for centuries in the guise of swans.

The book contains many interesting notes on birds. We are told that Irish magpies are believed (p. 20) to be the descendants of a flock of some dozen birds from England which were blown out of their course by an easterly gale and arrived exhausted on the Wexford coast about the year 1676; that two thousand wagtails roost (p. 8) in a certain tree in a Dublin street; of the nesting of a merganser (p. 109) on a tall conifer in the old nest of a grey crow. The story (p. 34) of a kestrel bitten and killed by a stoat it was carrying off reminds me of the fate of a golden eagle not far from Cape Wrath, which rose with a stoat to a great height, then fell lifeless to earth with a great wound in its throat, the stoat, strangely enough, unharmed after its strange experience. Mr. Armstrong (p. 7) believes that the moorhen never loses its timidity even when living with other birds that are tame. But I recall that at Falldon there was a moorhen which used to take bread from Lord Grey's hand, almost as readily as his tame ducks.

There is one small slip in Mr. Armstrong's chapter on the great auk. He describes (p. 217) Stack an Armin as being in the Orkneys: it is, as a matter of fact, a high rock rising from the Atlantic just off Boreray, one of the St. Kilda group of islands.

SETON GORDON.