

Birds in Camera ⁵¹

Twenty-five Years of Bird Photography. By Walter E. Higham. Pp. 127 (83 plates). (London and Glasgow: Wm. Collins, Sons and Co., Ltd., 1949.) 15s. net.

THIS book by Walter Higham is a book of photographs, and even among present-day bird photographs of excellence they stand out, not only because of their technique but also because of their composition. They are, perhaps, more than any photographs of birds which I have seen, real pictures and give delight when looked at again and again.

Some of the photographs show unusual nesting haunts. The author's picture of a curlew approaching the nest and eggs in a ploughed field portrays a site I have not previously known this shy bird to occupy, although I have often seen oystercatchers' nests in ploughed fields. One of his illustrations is of an almost white lapwing on the nest. A particularly beautiful photograph is of a sand martin in flight, its primaries outspread. The shadow of the bird is clearly seen outlined against the sand behind it. A woodcock with newly hatched young and four pictures of a ringed plover approaching or on its eggs, in open sand with no nest of any kind, are among other outstanding photographs in the book.

Mr. Higham gives two striking pictures of gannets on the Bass, one of a bird about to alight, the other of two birds sailing past in graceful, characteristic attitudes. There is a lovely photograph of a swallow on her nest of mud. It is easily the best swallow photograph I have seen. An interesting observation (p. 72) is that the author of the book saw a sheld-duck smoothing with her tail the footprints she had made while leaving her nesting burrow. My one criticism of this fine book, which the publishers have produced in a worthy manner, is its title. "Birds in Camera" is ambiguous and scarcely does justice to the contents.

SETON GORDON

A Descriptive Guide to the Libraries of the University of Leeds

By Dr. Richard Ofor. Pp. 134+6 plates. (Leeds: Brotherton Library, The University, 1947.) 6s. 6d.

IN completing, as his last task of University Librarian and keeper of the Brotherton Collection, this guide to the University library and the various departmental or specialist collections, Dr. Richard Ofor has rendered a real service not only to the University of Leeds but also to librarians and students elsewhere, and it is welcome news that it is proposed to keep the guide up to date by a series of annual supplements. Even when the "World List of Scientific Periodicals" and the "Union Catalogue of the Periodical Publications in the University Libraries of the British Isles" are again available, guides of this order will have a real value to the serious student, not merely because fuller information is supplied, but also because the arrangement facilitates some reasonable judgment as to where 'browsing' is likely to be most profitable.

The arrangement is entirely different from that of the "Reader's Guide to the British Library of Political and Economic Science": Dr. Ofor's guide is more purely descriptive and is not intended to teach simultaneously the use of a library. After dealing geographically with the main collections, he gives details of general works of reference and bibliography, general periodicals, general language and literature, and general science and technology, before indicating the serial holdings and special

collections under individual subjects in alphabetical order. There are a few anomalies; but they will not affect the warm welcome which must be given to an admirably produced and moderately priced volume.

R. B. H.B.

Atomic Energy

Being the Norman Wait Harris Lectures delivered at Northwestern University. By Dr. Karl K. Darrow. Pp. ix+80. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.; London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1948.) 12s. net.

HUNDREDS of physicists have, like Dr. K. K. Darrow, been called upon to explain the basis of atomic energy to a non-scientific audience; but few can have brought to the task the art, experience and knowledge that are happily mingled in these four lectures.

The usual road must be followed: atoms must be described and their structure explained, and the electrical forces that hold them together must be contrasted with the much stronger forces that bind neutrons and protons into nuclei and those that provide the energy of nuclear fission. The speaker must explain his terms, often by analogy, and must give some idea of the orders of magnitude involved. Then he must explain the potency of neutrons in provoking nuclear changes, and show how in special circumstances a chain reaction may be maintained. Finally, he may say as little as he cares, or as much as he dares, about the technical processes of pile operation and bomb design.

Dr. Darrow does all this with skill, and enlivens it with wit; when it is expedient to sacrifice exactness for clarity, he says quite clearly that this is being done. The result is an attractive and honest simplification of the subject that must have given great pleasure, as well as much information, to the audience; it is certainly pleasant and instructive to read.

It is a pity, though, that Dr. Darrow should propagate the myth that the extraction of energy from nuclei depends upon a knowledge of Einstein's mass-energy relation.

P. B. MOON

The Naturalism of Samuel Alexander

By John W. McCarthy. Pp. ix+111. (New York: King's Crown Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1948.) 11s. net.

THIS modest, but well-produced, book is another example of the good service provided by the King's Crown Press in making available sound learning at a reasonable cost without sacrificing anything essential. The author gives a most readable, and at the same time critical, account of Alexander's position, in particular his emphasis upon *nisus* (or *urge*) in all types of human activity. This comes out clearly in the chapter on the tertiary qualities (beauty, goodness, truth), and the connexion with levels of emergence is carefully explained.

An attempt to discuss value is perhaps less convincing; the author may well be right in his contention concerning the inadequacy of the instinctive life as such. But this is rather more a problem for 'applied sociology' than a basic defect of Alexander's philosophy. More serious by far, in the reviewer's opinion, is the *cul-de-sac* presented by leaving metaphysics 'stranded' without a liturgy, the result of an excessive realism in aesthetics. Dr. J. W. McCarthy's reaction to this seems admirable; perhaps he will develop it further.

F. I. G. RAWLINS