Sir Isaac Newton : Theological Manuscripts

Selected and Edited with an Introduction by Dr. H. McLachlan. Pp. vii+147. (Liverpool : University Press of Liverpool, 1950.) 7*s*. 6*d*.

MEMBERS of the general public have not been accustomed to associate Newton with theological controversy, though considerable interest was aroused by a lecture—"Newton, the Man"—prepared by the late Lord Keynes and read by his brother, Mr. Geoffrey Keynes, at the Newton Tercentenary Celebrations held by the Royal Society in 1946. In this lecture attention was directed to the Newton Papers which had been in the custody of Viscount Lymington and which in 1936 were offered for sale. Through the generosity of Lord Keynes, many of these papers ultimately found their way to King's College, Cambridge ; ten of the theological manuscripts have been selected and edited by Dr. H. McLachlan in the volume under review.

The value of the book is enhanced by the author's introduction. In the first part are indicated the scope and subsequent history of Newton's writings on religion. These were numerous ; according to Prof. Andrade's estimate, "there were over 1,300,000 words in MSS. on theology in the Portsmouth Collection". In the second part of the introduction Dr. McLachlan traces the development and character of Newton's theology, adding a note on Arius and Socinus. This part of the introduction is especially helpful to the layman not familiar with the theological controversies associated with Arianism and Socinianism and which deny the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Newton's zeal for Protestantism is evident in his writings on Scripture, Church history and Christian doctrine. Among the manuscripts included in Dr. McLachlan's volume are "Irenicum—or Ecclesiastical Polity tending to Peace", and several on religion. As might be expected from Newton's Unitarian interests, there is a manuscript in which special attention, in the form of "Queries", is directed to the word "homoousios" and the meaning of the Nicene Creed. The longest manuscript concerns the morals and actions of Athanasius and his followers.

General and Scripture indexes are provided ; the presentation of these hitherto unpublished MSS. of Newton has been made possible by the Hibbert Trustees.

H. D. ANTHONY

The Yellow Wagtail

By Dr. Stuart Smith. (New Naturalist Monograph.) Pp. xiv+178+12 plates. (London and Glasgow : Wm. Collins, Sons and Co., Ltd., 1950.) 12*s*. 6*d*. net.

THE yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava flavissima*) is a sub-species (confined almost entirely to Great Britain) of a species which is widely distributed in the Old World. It was not until 1832 that Gould separated the yellow wagtail from the blue-headed wagtail, which, in its winter quarters, considerably outnumbers the yellow wagtail. As many as twenty sub-species of *Motacilla flava* have been separated. The yellow wagtail is a local bird in Britain ; in Scotland the valley of the Clyde is its headquarters. It no longer nests in districts from which it used to be reported ; it does not apparently nest in the Hebrides (how many readers will recognize these Western Isles in the author's name "Ebudes" ?), although at one time it bred on Raasay. In northern England the bird has increased ; but in the south of that country it has generally decreased. It has now entirely disappeared from Eire as a nesting species.

Dr. Stuart Smith has devoted long and arduous research to his subject, and has brought to light much valuable information regarding this small and attractive bird, which is a summer visitor to the British Isles and winters in West Africa, where the allied sub-species, the blue-headed wagtail, also winters. This book has an added interest and value in that it is illustrated, besides by the author's photographs, by twenty-six reproductions of paintings by Edward Bradbury, paintings which combine beauty with accuracy. The work is of the same high standard of production which characterized the earlier books of the New Naturalist series.

SETON GORDON

Genes, Plants and People

Essays on Genetics. By C. D. Darlington and K. Mather. Pp. xxi+187. (London : George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1950.) 16*s*. net.

THE title of this book seems to have been chosen with at least one eye on the intelligent general reader who feels that he does not know much about genetics, but hopes that the book will help him to find a trail through a technological jungle in a *terra incognita*. This class of reader will be sadly disappointed, for the book consists of a series of mainly professional essays, the earliest of which was written in 1929 and the latest in 1945. In addition, there is an article on Soviet genetics, with particular reference to the Lysenko affair, reprinted from *The Nineteenth Century and After*.

These essays are not, as the jacket suggests, "scattered in many journals", since twelve out of sixteen are reprinted from *Nature*. Can the reprinting of such a series of essays in an unmodified form be justified ? Some of the essays the authors might want to leave alone. They might hold that the last word has been said. But in a discipline which is above all dynamic and not static, it is pretty certain that an essay written last year is likely to be more valuable than one written some years ago.

Serious workers would, however, be well advised to get the book ; first, because for them it is a great convenience to have the essays in book form, and secondly, because they are significant milestones in the history of genetics.

S. C. HARLAND

Modern Plastics

By Dr. Harry Barron. Second edition, revised. Pp. xx+779. (London : Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1949.) 50*s*. net.

ACCORDING to the preface, the object of the author is to present an overall view of the plastics industry to a reader possessing a modest scientific and engineering background. The subject has been described under the main headings of raw materials ; thermosetting resins ; cellulose plastics ; vinyl plastics ; other plastics like nylon, casein, etc. ; the analysis and testing of plastics. Included in this second edition are details of German practice as obtained from C.I.O.S. and B.I.O.S. reports, and also a chapter on the silicone resins, but there are some omissions, for example, the polytetrafluorethylene plastics.

Technological aspects of the manufacture of plastics are fully described, and the reader is assisted by many good diagrams and illustrations of plant. The style is of a popular character which results in a somewhat superficial treatment of the chemistry of polymers, but there is little doubt that the author has in great measure achieved his object.