

a series of experiments with numerous modern smokeless powders, carried out in a 100-calibre 6-inch gun.

We still employ M.D. cordite in spite of the almost universal adoption by our European neighbours and the Americans of simple nitrocellulose powders, which they experience considerable trouble in keeping in a stable condition, and we may therefore assume that no great advance has been made since Noble's experiments clearly indicated the right path to be followed in the production of a trustworthy smokeless powder which shall give minimum erosion, whilst possessing the essential quality of stability.

J. S. S. B.

A HALF-DOZEN ILLUSTRATED NATURE BOOKS.¹

IF the lover of natural history and country life whose tastes incline to the study of the higher animals, and who may also possess an appetite for a spice of philosophy, cannot find matter to his liking in at least one of this excellent half-dozen of popular books, he must indeed be hard to please. The first five are charming examples of the modern style of nature-study and popular natural history works, and the general excellence of the style of the text is only equalled (or shall we say surpassed?) by the exquisite illustrations. Since each volume has a special line of its own, we are fortunately spared the invidious task of deciding as to their comparative merits.

The first volume in the list—the forerunner, apparently, of a series of volumes written on the same general lines—is a natural history of mammals, in which, while the group is taken in systematic order, the method of treatment is so popular (and at the same time so accurate) that it can scarcely fail to appeal to a very large series of readers, many of whom will be glad to find it unencumbered, as a rule, with scientific names. The great feature of Mr. Ingersoll's book is, however, formed by the illustrations, many of which—more especially the coloured plates and the reproductions from photographs—are beyond praise. Among the best may be reckoned several of the twelve coloured plates drawn by the author's daughter. Those of the fallow-deer and the jaguar are reproductions from German works, and in the case of these, as well as in that of the water-chevrotain on p. 342, which is copied from an encyclopædia article by Sir W. H. Flower, we fail to notice any acknowledgment of the source. Special attention may be directed to the photo. of the Himalayan tahr on p. 262, as showing the shaggy character of the coat, which is so completely lost in all museum specimens we have seen. On the other hand, it may be noticed that on p. 240 the author gives a figure of the head of an African buffalo to do duty for that of the Indian wild ox or gaur; while the cut of an arial's head on p. 251 is a ludicrous caricature.

In general the text is well up to date, including, for

1 (1) "The Life of Animals—the Mammals." By E. Ingersoll. Pp. xi+555; illustrated (New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.) Price 8s. 6d. net.

(2) "Nature's Carol-Singers." By R. Kearton. Pp. 251; illustrated London: Cassell and Co., Ltd. Price 6s.

(3) "An Idler in the Wilds." By T. Edwardes. Pp. viii+109; illustrated. (London: John Murray.) Price 6s. net.

(4) "I Go A-Walking through the Woods and o'er the Moor." Compiled from the works of the late Rev. C. A. Johns and others. Pp. 79; illustrated. (Edinburgh and London: T. N. Foulis.) Price 2s. 6d. net.

(5) "Brier Patch Philosophy." By "Peter Rabbit." Interpreted by W. J. Long. Pp. xvii+296; illustrated. (London: Ginn and Co.) Price 6s. net.

(6) "Birds Shown to the Children." By M. K. C. Scott, described by J. A. Henderson. Pp. 112; illustrated. (London and Edinburgh: T. C. and C. E. Jack.) Price 2s. 6d. net.

instance, an account of the pedigree of the elephant; but it is rather behindhand in the matter of giraffes, and likewise in classing all antelopes as members of a single subfamily. Moreover, in definitely asserting that the latter animals are recent immigrants into Africa, the author ignores the recent suggestion of Mr. Madison Grant as to the Bovidæ being an endemic Ethiopian group. As instances of error we may refer to an evident mistake in regard to the colour of Pembroke cattle (p. 240), and to the reference of the name "ravine-deer" to the blackbuck (p. 277). These are, however, but trifling slips, and scarcely detract from the general excellence of a most attractive volume.

A Christmas bird-book from the pen and camera of Mr. Kearton is a standing dish to which all young bird-lovers look forward with delight, and we can



FIG. 1.—Chiffchaff and Nest. From "Nature's Carol-Singers."

assure them that they will not be disappointed at the fare their favourite author and artist has provided for the present season. This time Mr. Kearton has taken up his subject from a more definitely systematic point of view than usual, dealing "in a concise and popular manner with the appearance, haunts, habits, nests, eggs, songs, and call-notes of the winged melodists that breed in various parts of the British Islands. I have endeavoured," he continues, "to describe them in such a way that the reader may be able to identify them for himself or herself in wood and field, and where two species bear a similarity of appearance or song, to emphasise the points wherein they differ."

In this aim the author appears to have been successful, condensing the necessary technical descriptions

of colouring into as small a space as possible, and afterwards elaborating the more interesting details of habits and distribution. As in all Mr. Kearton's books, the great attraction is, however, the illustrations, which are from photographs by himself and his brother; and in this volume, were we not afraid of libelling their earlier efforts, we should be tempted to say that the artists have surpassed themselves. Be this as it may, the charming illustrations in this volume would be hard to beat, as our readers may judge for themselves from the sample here reproduced (Fig. 1), which was selected almost at random, as where all are excellent it is difficult to make a choice. A more attractive gift-book for young people fond of birds—as all of them should be, and probably are, when they have the proper opportunities—would be difficult to find.

The third volume in the list is, as implied by its title, less of a purely natural history than either of

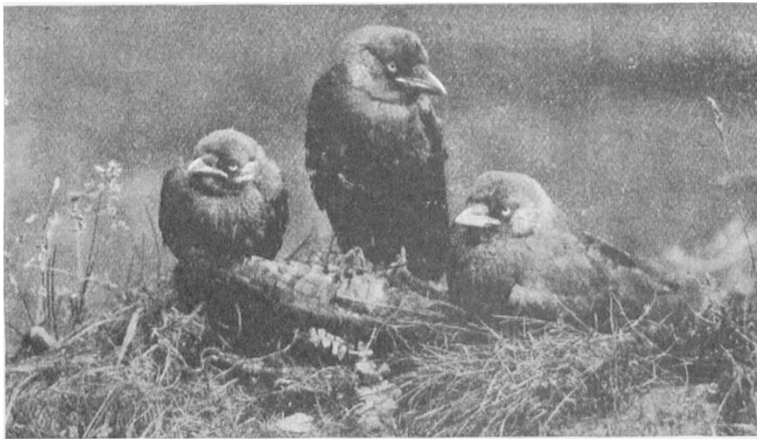


FIG. 2.—Young Rooks. From "I Go A-Walking."

the two preceding ones, dealing largely with country scenery and country life; the frontispiece depicts a beautiful scene from an old-fashioned English hamlet with thatched cottages, while other illustrations show no less exquisite glimpses of shore and river landscape. Certain chapters, such as the one on the flight of the swift and another on the song of the skylark, are, however, vivid sketches of phases in the habits and life-history of birds possessing a peculiar interest and charm of their own; and it is only lack of space that prevents our dwelling on these at some length. Both those mentioned are illustrated with photographs of the species to which they are respectively devoted, and many readers will be specially interested in the author's observations with regard to the nocturnal flight of the swift. In saying that Mr. Tickner Edwardes's little volume, although written on different lines, vies in interest with Sir Herbert Maxwell's "Memories of the Months" we are bestowing a very high meed of praise.

"I Go A-Walking," which is dated 1907, although it was previously issued in parts, and the first of these noted in our columns on its first appearance, is a series of brief illustrated biographies of certain selected birds and animals. These are, no doubt, excellent in their way, but the charm of the book lies in the illustrations; and since these are reproductions from photographs by Mr. C. Reid, of Wishaw, it would be waste of words to add anything in the way of commendation. A special feature of the work is

the number of illustrations of groups of young birds, and that our readers may judge for themselves as to the excellence of these (and the illustrations generally) we reproduce, by the courtesy of the publisher, one showing a trio of young rooks.

The fifth book on our list is on a higher plane and of a type totally different from any of the others, dealing mainly with animal psychology, and revealing the thoughtful and speculative mind of the talented author. To do justice to Mr. Long's ideas and theories in the space of a few lines is a manifest impossibility, and we must be content to refer to his belief that the lower animals "possess a rudimentary mind," and may therefore be accorded "some small chance for immortality." With these sentiments we have no cavil, but when we read the statement that "death to the animal is but a sleep, and the only thought in his head when he lies down for the last time is nature's whisper that he will waken as usual when the right time comes," we would ask the author how many wild animals die, so to speak, in their beds? With this brief notice we must leave (and commend) a thoughtful work to the best attention of earnest and thoughtful readers.

Last, and likewise least, is the little volume on birds in Miss Chisholm's "Shown to the Children" series. In works of this nature the necessity for abundant illustration over-rides all other considerations, and if in this instance quantity somewhat exceeds quality, it must be borne in mind that forty-eight full-page coloured plates form a very liberal allowance in a half-crown book, and that the style of execution will probably pass muster among the readers of the book.

If we except a few sentences, such as the statement that blackbirds eat snails, the letterpress appears in the main to be just what should be provided for very juvenile readers.

R. L.

THE TREATMENT OF CANCER.

IT is an appropriate coincidence that the sensational statements made in the daily Press last week respecting the cure of cancer should have as their antidote the scientific discourse "On the Treatment of Cancer by Modern Methods," which was delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons, as the Bradshaw lecture, by Mr. Edmund Owen on December 12. In an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* Dr. Saleeby went so far as to assert that the conquest of cancer is within measurable distance, the means of cure being trypsin, a digestive ferment formed by the pancreas and passed in its secretion into the duodenum—the upper part of the small intestine.

The use of trypsin as a cure for cancer seems to have suggested itself independently to two observers, Mr. J. Beard and Dr. Shaw-Mackenzie, the former apparently on embryological grounds, and the latter because of the comparative immunity of the small intestine from cancer. Thus, in 105,374 cases of cancer of the digestive tract, the small intestine was affected in only twenty.¹ Beard found that in mice, the subjects of experimental cancer (the Jensen

¹ Shaw-Mackenzie, *Brit. Med. Journ.*, 1906, i, p. 715.