

NATURAL HISTORY AND TRAVEL.¹

THE latest addition to Messrs. Witherby's well got-up series of volumes on the life-histories of British birds, four of which, dealing with the golden eagle, the osprey, the spoonbill, the stork, and some herons, have already been issued, is quite equal to its predecessors as a contribution to ornithology. The four species of terns (1) are its subject-matter; and the author, Mr Bickerton, is to be congratulated for the excellence of his photographs showing the eggs, the young and adult birds, and the nesting-sites, as well as for the time and labour devoted to securing them, and to compiling the voluminous notes embodied in the text. To the ordinary reader the text is naturally somewhat tedious on account of its prolixity and repetitions, unavoidably due to the similarity in mode of life of the species described; and the value of the volume would have been increased by the addition of a short chapter summarising the results, and pointing out briefly the differences in habit between the several species. This is the only criticism, however, we have to offer of an admirable and painstaking piece of work; and we trust Mr. Bickerton will be able to find the leisure to observe and record the habits of other groups of British birds in a similar way.

"The Charm of the Hills" (2) is mainly a collection of reprints of articles already published in various periodicals, such as the *Scotsman* and *Country Life*. The book is divided into two parts, chapters i. to xxxi. being a miscellaneous series of disconnected chapters dealing mostly with certain aspects of bird-life in the Scotch highlands, while the second part, entitled, "The Year on the Hills," also devoted mainly to birds, recounts observations upon their habits in the Cairngorm mountains in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Mr. Seton Gordon is an enthusiastic and trustworthy field-naturalist, and while he writes feelingly and well about his own personal experiences, his book contains a great deal that is interesting and instructive to those for whom wild life in the mountains has a fascination.

1 (1) "The Home-life of the Terns or Sea Swallows." Photographed and Described by W. Bickerton. Pp. 88+xxxii mounted plates. (London: Witherby and Co., 1912.) Price 6s. net.

(2) "The Charm of the Hills." By S. Gordon. Pp. xiv+248. (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1912.) Price 10s. 6d. net.

(3) "The Flowing Road." *Adventuring on the Great Rivers of South America.* By C. Whitney. Pp. 319. (London: W. Heinemann, 1912.) Price 12s. 6d. net.

(4) "Wild Life and the Camera." By A. R. Dugmore. Pp. xi+332. (London: W. Heinemann, 1912.) Price 6s. net.

(5) "The Feet of the Furtive." By C. G. D. Roberts. Pp. 277. (London: Ward, Lock, and Co., 1st ed., 1912.) Price 6s.

(6) "Insect Workers." By W. J. Claxton. Pp. xii+62. (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1912.) Price 1s. net.

(7) "Letters from Nature's Workshop." By W. J. Claxton. Pp. 192. (London: G. G. Harrap and Co., 1912.) Price 1s. 6d. net.

"The Flowing Road" (3) is full of facts of interest both to the naturalist and the geographer. It is an account of five expeditions, mostly by canoe, along the rivers and streams of the northern countries of South America. Two of these were undertaken with the object of visiting a native people in the south-eastern corner of Venezuela, reported to be savage and unknown. The others, however, as the author tells us, were instigated "neither by a wish to hunt the beasts of the jungle . . . nor to report on the social or industrial conditions of the land, nor even to add to the sum of knowledge of the 'scientific' world—but solely to satisfy the hunger which incites me every now and again to go and 'see things'—the curiosity which Prof. Shale has called the primal instinct." Despite this modest disclaimer, nevertheless Mr. Whitney's narrative, setting forth the true nature of the areas traversed, and of the inhabitants found there, is a really valuable



FIG. 1.—The Arctic tern—admirably protected by the surroundings on which it has settled. From "The Home life of the Terns or Sea Swallows," by W. Bickerton.

contribution to many branches of knowledge; because there are certainly few districts in the world lying beyond the beaten tracks of travel less accurately known than those drained by the Amazon and the Orinoco and their tributaries, and probably none, according to the author's experience, which have been so frequently and persistently misrepresented in printed accounts inspired by self-interest or based on the superficial observations of casual tourists.

Those who have heard Mr. Dugmore lecture would expect him to write entertainingly and well about the habits and characteristics of the animals with which he has had personal experience; and those who have read his "Camera Adventures in the African Wilds," will find "Wild Life and the Camera" (4) equally readable and trustworthy, although widely different in its subject-matter, which is confined to North American species.

The greater number of the chapters are given

up to birds; but there is much to interest anglers in those devoted to salmon- and trout-fishing. Mammals are in a minority; but perhaps the chapter describing caribou migration in Newfoundland is the most valuable in the book from the naturalist's point of view. A few chapters containing instructions and hints on bird and mammal photography, and on camping out, will be most helpful to those who wish to follow in Mr. Dugmore's steps and attempt to do what he has done under similar physical conditions.

"The Feet of the Furtive" (5) contains several well-written stories of a kind much in vogue at the present time, wherein the author weaves interesting facts in natural history into an attractive

Workers" (6), Mr. Claxton tells once again the story of the burying beetle, trapdoor spider, ants and aphides, wasps, and other common and familiar species of articulated animals the industries of which never fail to appeal to the imagination of children and to arouse their interest in creatures they are mostly taught by their elders to fear and destroy.

The purpose of awakening and fostering a taste for nature-study also underlies "Lessons from Nature's Workshop" (7), by the same author. This book, however, is rather more pretentious in scope than the last, and is written for readers of maturer mind, many of the chapters being devoted to more or less abstract questions in



FIG. 2.—The Newfoundland caribou in migration. Going at a quick walk, or swinging trot, or at times a gallop, they usually travel in single file along the well-worn leads or paths that have been used for centuries. In nearly all cases a doe leads the herd. From "Wild Life and the Camera."

fabric of fiction. The habits of familiar North American mammals are the theme Mr. Roberts presents so cleverly in this guise; but while giving full play to his imagination and to his powers of linguistic expression, he never oversteps the bounds of probability, and carefully avoids that pitfall authors too frequently dig for themselves and their readers, by attempting to humanise the species whose mode of life they wish to portray. Many of the stories recall others that have already been published by American authors; but there is a distinct air of novelty about the one called "The World of Ghost Lights," which gives a vivid picture of one aspect of life in the ocean depths.

In his little book for children, called "Insect

natural history. such as the struggle for existence in plants, assimilative coloration, scenery, and so forth.

R. I. P.

PROF. NOGUCHI'S RESEARCHES ON
INFECTIVE DISEASES.

THE Royal Society of Medicine mostly limits the record of its work to its own Proceedings and the medical journals; and it does well to observe this wise rule. But from time to time it receives some communication of the highest importance to the general welfare, and on such occasions it is mindful of its immediate duty to the public. It lately held a special meeting, at which Prof. Noguchi, of the Rockefeller Institute, demonstrated the results of his researches into