

party in Vienna, and above all by the Chancellor Berchtold, who, having secured a free hand from Germany, managed gradually, and in the end by a falsehood, to win over the old Emperor to the declaration of war.

The only satisfaction one can derive from the terrible story is that those have paid most heavily who sinned worst. The old Austrian system which produced such things has been completely swept away—the best and greatest clearance of the War. F. S. MARVIN.

*The Natural History of Wicken Fen.* Edited by Prof. J. Stanley Gardiner. Part 3. Pp. 173-266. (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1926.) 5s. net.

THE acquisition of Wicken Fen by the National Trust has afforded Prof. Stanley Gardiner and his colleagues an opportunity of carrying out a type of natural history investigation which British zoologists have been inclined to neglect, although it promises valuable results. In the British Isles, collecting has tended to diffuseness: the entomologist flits from one area to another where good collections are likely to be made; other local lists owe their existence to the chance presence of enthusiasts, but seldom is a single limited area worked to the bone as regards all its content. Part 3 of the "Natural History of Wicken Fen" continues the results of the intensive study of natural groups, ranging from Oligochæta and Mollusca to several insect orders, and including a flora list and a historical note on changes in the fen during the last forty years, all valuable contributions.

The biological aspect is notably prominent in the papers by Prof. Balfour-Browne, Miss Pickford, and Mr. Hutchinson, and a perfect foundation is being laid for an ecological study which will trace the fluctuations of the animal groups in relation to each other and to the vegetational and soil changes from season to season and from year to year. Zoology has lagged far behind botany in ecological study, but we trust that before this series is completed, the editor may be able to arrange a symposium which will make up some of the leeway. J. R.

*Naturforscher und Erfinder: Biographische Miniaturen.* Von Prof. Dr. Ludwig Darmstaedter. Pp. vii+182+16 Tafeln. (Bielefeld und Leipzig: Velhagen und Klasing, 1926.) n.p.

THIS charming book consists of thumb-nail sketches of the lives of famous men of science, and is well illustrated with portraits and with facsimiles of autograph letters. Physicians, physicists, chemists, and others all find a place, and the true internationalism of science is reflected in the catholic nature of Prof. Darmstaedter's gallery. Biographical details have a perennial interest, and in the present instance many of them are new, or at least not generally known. One of the most interesting sections deals with the men who were responsible for "the error of phlogiston and its overthrow," namely, Stahl, Black, Marggraf, Priestley, Scheele, and Lavoisier, though microscopists will derive equal enjoyment from the sketches of Leeuwenhoek, Redi, and Ehrenberg, and physicists from the sympathetic insight into the minds of Gilbert, Guericke, von Kleist, Galvani, Volta, and Ohm. Prof. Darmstaedter says that the

compilation of this book has brightened his life during the last two years, and he may be assured that the wish he expresses—that his readers may get as much enjoyment from it as he has done—will be fulfilled. If we ourselves may express a wish, it is that he may live long and give us more books of the same kind.

*The Whalers of Akutan: an Account of Modern Whaling in the Aleutian Islands.* By Knut B. Birkeland. Pp. vi+171+16 plates. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1926.) 14s. net.

MODERN whaling with explosive harpoons has spread to all parts of the world, generally through Norwegian enterprise. This book describes vividly the life and methods in a whaling station in Akutan in the Aleutian Islands, where blue whales and sperms were the chief catch. It dwells not only on the adventure and incidents of the life, but also contains a great deal of information about the commercial side of the industry, the preparation of the oil, the utilisation of the débris for fertiliser and whale meat as human food. Since the author, at nearly sixty years of age, was new to whaling when called upon to manage the station, he describes many minor matters that an experienced whaler would be likely to pass by as unworthy of mention. This adds to the interest of the book; but unfortunately he had little opportunity to see much of the Aleutian Islands beyond the station, and has relatively little of value to say about the natives, and nothing about the geography and natural history of these little-known islands.

*Methoden der angewandten Geophysik.* Von Dr. Richard Ambronn. (Wissenschaftliche Forschungsberichte, Naturwissenschaftliche Reihe, Band 15.) Pp. xii+258. (Dresden und Leipzig: Theodor Steinkopff, 1926.) 15 gold marks.

As the title indicates, this book is largely influenced by the economic aspect of geophysics. Prominence is given to the discovery of ores and salt deposits by means of the Eötvös torsion balance, and by seismological and magnetic methods. Most of the book deals, however, with the purely scientific parts of the subject. It contains a bibliography of about 1700 references, but unfortunately there are signs that they have not all been verified, and the author seldom gives much information himself, referring the reader instead to original sources, with little indication of what is to be found there. H. J.

*Description du ciel.* Par André Danjon. (Bibliothèque générale illustrée, 2.) Pp. 80+59 planches. (Paris: F. Rieder et Cie, 1926.) 15 francs.

THIS pleasantly written and well-printed booklet gives in eighty pages a brief but wide survey of present-day astronomy. It can be recommended to English readers of the French language who desire acquaintance with modern views and problems in astronomy, rather than a knowledge of the detailed facts. The fifty-nine plates, each occupying a page, are reproductions, good on the whole, of photographs of observatories and telescopes, the sun and moon, the planets, comets, stellar spectra, the Milky Way, clusters, and nebulae.