

An Architect of Nature

Being the Autobiography of Luther Burbank. With Biographical Sketch by Wilbur Hall. (Thinker's Library, No. 76.) Pp. xvii+139. (London: Watts and Co., 1939.) 1s. net.

IN this autobiography Luther Burbank reveals what proved to be the driving force behind his amazing life when he wrote "Darwin made important and absolutely new findings with regard to pollenization and fertilization, but, when he made them and set them down, he left it to others to make the rules useful". Burbank took it upon himself to be a pioneer among those "others", and now "every schoolboy knows" how he rapidly built up new species of plants by selecting with a knife, a hoe, or a spade and bonfire rather than by allowing new forms to develop more slowly under the deadly environmental competition of Nature.

In an introductory biographical sketch to this little volume, Wilbur Hall describes how Burbank had reached the age of seventy years before he felt constrained to express on paper the more important thoughts, observations and philosophical speculations of his life. This book represents all that he limned in his own words, so that one would expect it to remain a fount of delight to all who are interested in the man who was "blasphemed, preached about, talked at, written to, telegraphed, scolded, abused, and even vilified" merely because of his attempts to speed up Nature's methods by making use of keen and discerning man-made selective processes in the production of new types of plants. T. H. H.

On Miasmata and Contagia

By Jacob Henle. Translated by Dr. George Rosen. Pp. 77. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938.) 1 dollar.

THIS important essay by one whom Garrison describes as the greatest German histologist and one of the greatest anatomists of all time, was originally published in 1840 in Henle's "Pathologische Untersuchungen", and contains the first clear statement that living organisms are the cause of contagious and infectious diseases. Dr. George Rosen, who has provided an excellent translation, points out that Henle's theory was not based on any personal experiments but on the data collected by his predecessors, such as Athanasius Kircher and Leeuwenhoek in the seventeenth century, who described infusoria and other microscopic animalcules, Wichmann who discovered the *Acarus scabiei*, Agostino Bassi who found that muscardine, an infectious disease of silkworms, was caused by a fungus, Cagniard de la Tour and Schwann, who showed that fermentation was due to yeast, and Schönlein, who discovered the parasitic cause of favus. Henle maintained that in infectious disease the morbid matter increased from the time that it entered the body, and that it must be organic in nature as only living organisms were able to do this. His view that the organism probably belonged to the plant kingdom was confirmed by Robert Koch, one of the most eminent of his pupils, more than thirty years later.

A Manual of Practical Anatomy

A Guide to the Dissection of the Human Body. By Prof. Thomas Walmsley. Second edition. In 3 Parts. Part 2: The Thorax and Abdomen. Pp. viii+331+7 plates. (London, New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1939.) 12s. 6d. net.

THE principal changes in the new and greatly enlarged edition of this work, of which the first appeared in 1921, are the introduction of fuller accounts of the examination of the living body, and especially of parts important in clinical practice, a short description of the action of muscles and the changes in the form of parts when they function, the incorporation of numerous new figures and skiagrams of the stomach, intestines and urinary tract, and a change in the nomenclature to that adopted by the Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

The book may be warmly recommended as an excellent practical guide for the dissector.

General Science Biology

By A. Spencer White. (Dent's Modern Science Series.) Pp. vii+243. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1939.) 2s. 3d.

THIS work has been prepared as a companion volume to the already published "General Science Physics" and "General Science Chemistry" by the same author. The text is largely based on the reports of the teaching of general science compiled by the Science Masters' Association, and is intended to cover the biology section of the general science syllabus of the School Certificate examinations. The material is presented in quite an interesting manner, great prominence being given to experimental work. The inclusion of subjects which would involve the use of the microscope is questionable, although use might be made of them as demonstrations. There is an abundance of supplementary line-drawings, which possess a diagrammatic clarity and simplicity that might usefully serve as a model for pupils.

Reminiscences of Country Life

By James George Cornish. Edited by Vaughan Cornish. Pp. xi+147+8 plates. (London: Country Life, Ltd., 1939.) 10s. 6d. net.

THESE reminiscences cover a period of seventy years of life in rural England—country parishes in the counties of Suffolk, Berkshire and Devon. Their author, James George Cornish, was born in 1860 and died in 1938. Throughout his life, as these records bear witness, he was gifted with an observant eye for the life of the countryside and individual traits in the character of the countryman. His reminiscences have been edited by his brother, Dr. Vaughan Cornish. As he points out, they derive no inconsiderable value from the fact that they preserve continuity over a very considerable period of time. This is especially interesting as in these years crucial changes took place in English agriculture and modes of country life.