

## A NEW ENGLAND NATURALIST

### A Naturalist at Large

By Thomas Barbour. Pp. xii+314. (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1943.) n.p.

IN the lives of the older naturalists, as of Louis Agassiz when he was young or John Hunter when he grew old, we find examples of quite peculiar happiness. All their labour was for the love of it; they did exactly as they pleased; they shared a carefree corner of the world with the painter and the poet. Dr. Thomas Barbour is one of the last of the old-fashioned naturalists, and it is the same way with him. He confesses, or boasts perhaps, that "he never does anything he don't want to do—not if he can help it"; and in consequence a glow of happiness runs all through his random reminiscences.

Dr. Barbour has been a museum man all his days, first in Boston, then in Salem, and lastly in the great Agassiz Museum in Cambridge, Mass., which he has had charge of for many years. He has the golden gift of friendship. He has known all the naturalists of his time; he has travelled far and wide, and his fellow-naturalists all the world over have a friend in him. He is a famous museum curator. He has added immense collections to the great museum founded by the elder Agassiz and enriched by his son; he knows what to store away and what to exhibit, and how to label a nightingale or an albatross for the instruction and benefit of ordinary unpedantic mankind.

Rumphius and Wallace set him travelling (with his young bride) to the Dutch East Indies, as they have led so many another naturalist on his way. There, in Ternate, he shot the Rajah's own cockatoo (and had "the devil to pay"); and found a wonderful lizard "with a great fanlike sail on its back and tail, like a Permian Pelycosaur in miniature", which Wallace and Max Weber had both failed to discover. He has explored Central America and Mexico, made countless journeys to the West Indies, visited South Africa later on, and brought stories as well as rich collections from them all. He has a fresh boyish enthusiasm for every rare and beautiful creature. A certain mouse from Darien, golden-brown above and pearly white below, is "a veritable gem among mice"; a tiny frog from Trinidad, living up-country in Bromelia flowers, is "a lovely little creature, tiny, but with eyes like jewels"; and a crystal-clear pool in a Cuban cavern holds "fairy shrimps of a most heavenly crimson, with white tips to their appendages as if they had stepped about delicately in white ink". They had been lost and forgotten, since they were seen long before by Felipe Poey, the first great Cuban naturalist. Dr. Barbour is a botanist among many other things, and for many years he has been in charge of the garden at Soledad, in Cuba, which belongs to Harvard University, and is now one of the great tropical gardens of the world. One of the inhabitants of this famous garden is "an indescribably lovely little frog, scarce a quarter of an inch long from stem to stern"; it had been described by Cope, and lost sight of for some sixty years. At Maracay, near Caracas, he saw the wonderful zoo which the old dictator Juan Vicente Gomez had formed, with the help of one of the Hagenbecks. Here enormous hippos lived in a pretty lake—around which giraffes, zebras and a host of antelopes wandered as if they were at home; and here were many greater rarities, such as spectacled bears from the Andes, the only

bear in South America, and a whole colony of Pacaranas, or Dinomys, one of the largest of all the rodents, very curious and exceedingly rare, unknown to our own Zoo and to the British Museum.

Dr. Barbour is not less interesting when he talks freely of his fellow-men. He has some new stories to tell of Cope and Marsh, the two great palaeontologists, bitter rivals and cunning foes; of David Fairchild, who married Alexander Graham Bell's daughter, and became a world-famous gardener and agriculturist; of Samuel Garman and H. F. Osborn and Leonard Stejneger; of E. S. Morse and of the much-loved "Uncle Bill Wheeler", who only died the other day; of President Lowell, and of Oliver Wendell Holmes (the judge not the professor) "who was one of the greatest men I ever knew—perhaps the greatest", but with one blind spot, common enough in frail humanity.

There is a modest paragraph about the luncheons in Dr. Barbour's own den in the Agassiz Museum—he calls it the "Eateria"—which Henry Bigelow and he set agoing years ago, and to which countless scientific men from all the world over have been hospitably bidden and been glad and proud to come. The cuisine is justly celebrated, even since "old Gilbert" died; and there are said to be tanks in the basement where turtle and terrapin await the illustrious guest.

This is a very human book, by a very lovable man. There is a certain oddity about it, and about him—which comes of working in a museum, and loving it, all his life long. For to be a true museum man, as Tom Barbour (or his daughter) says, "You don't *have* to be crazy, but it certainly helps".

D'ARCY W. THOMPSON.

## PSYCHOLOGY FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

### Sane Psychology: a Biological Introduction to Psycho'logy

By Prof. R. J. S. McDowall. A revised and enlarged edition of "A Biological Introduction to Psychology". Pp. xii+275. (London: John Murray, 1943.) 9s. net.

THE urgent necessity that the medical student should know as much as possible about the workings of the normal as well as the abnormal mind needs no underlining, though it has recently been emphasized by the General Medical Council. The present book, "for students of medicine, theology and education", is a brave attempt to meet these needs.

It seems fair to set down some requirements of a modern text-book of general psychology. (1) It should be simply written. (2) It should give numerous everyday examples of normal experience and behaviour, including that of children. (3) Abnormal psychology should not be regarded as determining the lines of normal psychology. (4) The concept of mental normality should be fully discussed, with especial reference to the relation of personality to culture-pattern; a normal commando-member who behaves like one, a week after the War ceases, will provide a headache for the ex-army psychiatrist also recently demobilized. (5) The theoretical and practical value to psychology of physiological knowledge should be realistically indicated; study in minute