

Beetles of the British Isles

By E. F. Linssen. First Series : The Superfamilies Caraboidea, Palpicornia, Staphyloidea and Diversicornia. Pp. 300+39 plates. Second Series : The Superfamilies Clavicornia, Heteromera, Lamellicornia, Phytophaga and Rhynchophora, and including the Strepsiptera. Pp. 295+87 plates. (Wayside and Woodland Series). (London and New York : Frederick Warne and Co. Ltd., 1959.) 60s. net the set.

THE aim of the "Wayside and Woodland" series is to enable naturalists and others to identify animals and plants in the field, chiefly by comparing their specimens with good-quality figures. In the present work the figures of adults are taken mainly from Fowler (1887-1891) and those of larvæ (as usual) from Schiödt (1861-1883). The latter have been adapted by Mr. A. F. Stuart, who is also responsible for the text-figures and the colouring of the plates. His work, original or adapted, is excellent. Of the 126 plates, 64 are coloured.

Many beetles can only be examined satisfactorily under a microscope, and in this work fine structural characters are given so that closer and more reliable determinations can be made than by using figures alone. There are keys to the families of some major groups. The system of classification adopted is that of Kloet and Hincks (1945). A most useful table is given in both volumes showing the superfamilies of Polyphaga recognized by various authors (1 : 140-141 and 2 : 16-17).

A work of this kind must inevitably take the form of a catalogue of species, with notes, and the author should be able to express himself clearly, concisely and authoritatively. Unfortunately, Mr. Linssen's style is cumbersome and many of his statements are inaccurate or obscure. Particularly deplorable is the large number of misspellings of scientific names which cannot fail to confuse the amateur, especially as genuine obsolete spellings are often given.

R. T. THOMPSON

From Ape to Angel

An Informal History of Social Anthropology. By H. R. Hays. Pp. 461+32 plates. (London : Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1959.) 36s. net.

BOOKS to popularize science may take many forms. Very attractive are those where some great man of science takes a recent discovery and translates it into language which can be understood by those whose knowledge of science is limited, but who still have inquiring minds. Equally valuable is the general interpreter, a man who appreciates the interest of the general public in a particular aspect of science at a given time, and distils knowledge from a wide variety of sources and presents it in an attractive and readily assimilable form. Because these works contain little that is wholly new and, for the sake of simplicity, sometimes put considerable strain on veracity, they are often dismissed with contemptuous references to 'pot-boiling'. Hays's popular narrative of man as a social animal, including accounts of his primitive behaviour, could be put in the latter category. Yet here, to match up with the considerable interest in the lives of primitive peoples which has been evoked by television, is a book which may well develop into a best-seller. To describe the extraordinary ethical, religious and marital customs of primitive peoples, Hays provides a short biography of the lives of famous pioneer anthropologists such as Henry Shoolcraft, Westermarck, Sir James Frazer,

Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski and others. The result has been the production of an informal history of social anthropology which is attractive and informative and which does the author credit for the assiduous way he has collected his information and put it together. "From Ape to Angel" has deservedly won recommendation from the Book Society.

T. H. HAWKINS

The Thyroid Hormones

By Dr. Rosalind Pitt-Rivers and Jamshed R. Tata. With a Chapter on Diseases of the Thyroid by W. R. Trotter. (International Series of Monographs on Pure and Applied Biology. Division : Biochemistry, Vol. 1.) Pp. xiii+247. (London and New York : Pergamon Press, 1959.) 50s. net.

A BOOK by two such authorities on research into the thyroid gland could scarcely fail to be useful. The authors say that their aim is to unfold the story of the thyroid hormones and to discover which hypotheses concerning their biosynthesis, mode of action, and the aetiology of thyroid disorders, have received experimental support. They also have tried to provide research workers in the field of thyroid physiology and biochemistry with as many references to the recent literature as possible.

The unexpected appearance of tri-iodothyronine on the scene in 1952, in which Dr. Pitt-Rivers herself played a leading part, has led to much new thinking about thyroid hormones. We are still without a finally accepted view about the nature of thyroid hormones and their mechanism of action, but the present book sets out as much as can be reasonably concluded at the present time. More information about the actual amounts of the different thyroid hormones found in blood and tissues under physiological conditions might have been expected, but undoubtedly much checking and re-checking must be done before final conclusions are drawn. The authors have clearly succeeded in their formulated aims in writing this book.

F. G. YOUNG

Dana's Manual of Mineralogy

Revised by Prof. Cornelius S. Hurlbut, jun. Seventeenth edition. Pp. xii+609. (New York : John Wiley and Sons, Inc. ; London : Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1959.) 78s. net.

JAMES DWIGHT DANA'S classic "System of Mineralogy" has stood the test of time, so also has his "Manual of Mineralogy", which has now reached its seventeenth edition. The first edition of the "Manual" appeared in 1848; since then many revisions and editions have appeared, the last being in 1952. The latest revision was undertaken by Cornelius S. Hurlbut, jun., professor of mineralogy in Harvard University. It introduces the broad use of the crystal-chemical approach, and many of the chapters have been expanded in this light. The chapter on "Crystal Systems" now includes discussions of the stereographic projection, the thirty-two crystal classes, calculation of axial ratios and X-ray crystallography. This new approach enables the properties of minerals to be treated through fundamental structures and chemical consideration. It is hoped that if future revisions are made care will be taken not to resolve the "Manual" into a form indistinguishable from the "System of Mineralogy". It is better that the "Manual" maintains its original purpose, for students, amateur collectors and mining geologists.