

involuntary deception which occurred in the "Clever Hans" case. One limitation to Atlanta's learning ability seems to be her difficulty in taking an initial interest in the particular test set for her, and this was most marked in counting problems. It took the author a long time to get her arithmetic lessons going at all, but at the end of the book she could apparently count up to ten with fair accuracy.

Atlanta has become known to countless television viewers and this book will add to her admirers. It is thorough, but pleasantly and lightly written against the background of Dartmoor and some of its wild and human inhabitants, and well illustrated. Equally satisfying is it that Atlanta was still alive at the end of the book.

GRAHAM DES FORGES.

THE DESERT, by A. STARKER LEOPOLD; THE SEA, by LEONARD ENGEL; THE POLES, by WILLEY LEY; THE MOUNTAINS, by LORUS J. MILNE and MARGERY MILNE. *Life Nature Library*, Time-Life International. 32s. 6d. each.

These are the first four volumes of a series of nature books, each consisting of an introductory essay on the main heading, and subsidiary articles on some aspects of it, such as the animals and the plants of each environment. They are all interesting and superbly illustrated. The same author writes every essay in each book and the style is popular. Of course as the scope of each volume is so vast and its size comparatively small—190 pages including copious illustrations, bibliography, and index—the subjects can only be dealt with in a restricted way, but the treatment is not superficial in a derogatory sense. The final essays in each book deal with man's relationship to the particular environment, and these, together with the introductory essays, I found the most absorbing.

One can, of course, pick holes now and again. Page 147 of *The Sea*, for instance, says "the only walrus left roam a few remote areas of Greenland and the Arctic", which gives a wrong impression of the walrus populations and is in fact contradicted in *The Poles*, which gives the present-day walrus population as 70,000.

A brief description of the first volume will perhaps give a further idea of the scope of this series. In his introductory essay to *The Desert*, Dr. Starker Leopold explains what a desert really is and, with the aid of a map, briefly describes the main deserts of the world. Following a wonderful series of pictures of the Sahara, he writes about the creation of deserts, the people, animals and plants of deserts, on the eternal problem of water and on man's struggle against the desert environment. Finally, we read how, with the present enormous strides in technical achievement, desert lands are being brought into the service of mankind at an ever accelerating speed.

C. L. BOYLE.

SNAKES OF AFRICA. By R. I. ISEMONGER. Nelson. 21s.

Having had a special love for snakes ever since, when a schoolboy, I was bitten and nearly died through carelessly handling an adder, it was with pleasant anticipation that I opened Richard Isemonger's book. It is an odd fact that, sooner or later, every field herpetologist, no matter how experienced, must ruefully admit that he has been bitten by the very animal he loves, and the author is no exception. Yet like all devoted snake-men he exonerates the serpent from all blame, and continues with his dangerous pursuit. This is a book full of fascination and excitement spiced with humour

and thrills. Having read chapters on myths and folk-lore, "tall" stories, eye-witness accounts, and exciting adventures like the rescue of mambas and cobras during the Operation Noah project at Kariba, one is brought to sober and chilling reality with an account of snake venoms and their effects. There is also a chapter on the career of "Bwana Byoka" or "Snake Man", C. J. P. Ionides, perhaps the greatest snake-catcher of them all. Fully half is devoted to a very useful list of snakes found in East, Central, and South Africa, giving descriptions, feeding, distribution, etc., which should prove a valuable field-guide to anyone who may encounter the much maligned serpent. One thing seems certain—it will never deliberately attack you. Even so, many readers will probably close this book with the comment that all "snake men" must be mad, which is perhaps the highest compliment they could wish for.

ALFRED LEUTSCHER.

THE REPTILES. By ARCHIE CARR. Time Inc., New York. \$4.60.

There is very little to say about this book beyond "unreservedly recommended". The text is excellently written and profusely illustrated, mostly in colour, and one wonders how it can be done for the equivalent of thirty shillings. It is just the kind of book to give a teen-age zoologist for whom the standard textbooks are too advanced and the popular works too superficial. But Professor Carr writes a gloomy story, despite its excellence. In his closing section, *Twilight of the Reptiles*, he writes with such fatality that one can only be left with the feeling that "they had a good time while it lasted" without much hope for the future. Is it too much to hope that such conservation measures as are in existence have not come too late?

J. I. MENZIES.

WILD LIVES OF AFRICA. By JULIETTE HUXLEY. Collins. 30s.

This is a most enjoyable and well illustrated book, written attractively and with originality. Juliette's natural gift of self-expression is to be envied. A lover of wildlife and a keen observer, she is above all an enthusiastic conservationist, so no opportunity is lost of pleading the cause of the welfare of Africa's wild creatures. *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi* is a hackneyed phrase which should long ago have become meaningless, but the author shows how wrong one can be.

The theme is a thirteen-weeks' journey of some thousands of miles, from the Cape to the borders of the Sudan, at incredibly high pressure, by land, water, and air when Juliette accompanied her husband—who has written an "Introduction" and a "Postscript"—on his visits to more than three dozen National Parks and Nature Reserves to study conservation on behalf of UNESCO. The mere contemplation of such an arduous programme would make many a younger heart quail. What was accomplished in so short a time is almost miraculous. Who could better the vivid description of the dying baobab: "In times of drought also, the wise but destructive elephants excavate them with tusk and trunk until the trees hang disembowelled and broken-hearted: they die that way, going limp all over like wet stuffing." Those familiar with the baobab and with elephant damage will recognize the touch of a master hand in this graphic portrayal of the soggy, pulp-like mess to which the great pachyderms can reduce these once mighty trees. Juliette laments "a bath of kipper-smelling water"; she was lucky, for the reviewer (and his wife) have often had to *drink* this! One senses an imp of mischief prompting the description of "Julian . . . his hair at several angles, like a