

BOOK REVIEW

The Life of Insects, by V. B. WIGGLESWORTH. A Mentor book, World Publishing Company, New York and Toronto. Pp. 383. \$1.50.

There are few indeed who are qualified to review the content of a book in his own field by Prof. Sir V. B. Wigglesworth. But with the appearance of his new and generalised paperback it is fair to appraise the format, and to speculate on where it may take its place amongst books of comparable price and scope.

The audience envisaged is said to be the customary interested reader or knowledgeable layman, but in point of fact the book would make nearly an ideal *modern* text for teaching introductory entomology. The arrangement demonstrates this to some extent. Twelve pages of preliminaries and acknowledgments are followed by 298 pages of text; then 32 pages of appendix which are really chapter 18, a very bare outline of taxonomy entitled A Catalogue of Insects; next 265 references by chapters to classic books and papers dated to 1962; a glossary of 176 terms; and 10½ pages of index. All this for a price tag about one-tenth that of the usual texts.

The illustrations deserve special mention. There are 36 half-tone plates, plus 16 in color which consist of 29 photographs of protective and warning coloration, mimicry, pigmentation, etc. All these are excellent. The 164 text figures, almost always on the appropriate pages of text, are judiciously chosen from basic works. All the old friends are represented:

Snodgrass, Imms, Weber, Berlese, von Frisch, Pesson, Metcalfe and Flint, Grasse, Knight, Wigglesworth himself of course, even Albrecht Durer and Shell Chemical! Their reproduction is never inadequate even if it is sometimes less than perfect, but this is a small penalty for the low price. The effect was to make my mouth water for the hardback edition, presumably on better paper.

Those who heard Sir Vincent lecture or who met him when he attended our annual dinner in March, 1967, will recall with pleasure how lightly he wore his immense learning and how completely un-stuffy he was. These qualities come through in the non-pedantic writing. It is limpid and economical, avoiding jargon and lightened by deft near colloquialisms. He writes of evolutionary changes in the feeding habits of insects accompanied by changes in the cutlery used for feeding; the lower lip in Hemiptera is deeply grooved to sheath the business part; Homoptera have a beak; some organs are sausage shaped; a freshly molted cockroach if trodden on may pop like a burst balloon; *Dytiscus* beetles consume their pre-digested prey as a uniform soup; and so on.

This is the best general text I have seen since Imms', "Insect Natural History" of 1947. It is superior in its approach through physiology and it covers more ground geographically and scientifically.

—H. R. MacCarthy