

Reviews.

[“The Life of Samuel White—Soldier, Naturalist, and Sailor.”]

THIS neat *brochure*, which is illustrated by photographic and coloured plates, is written by Capt. S. A. White, C.M.B.O.U., son of the late Samuel White, and is sympathetically handled, especially as Capt. White is himself an intrepid explorer and naturalist. The little work also casts sidelights on the early settlement of South Australia, when Samuel's father, John White, in 1836 arrived from England and settled at “The Reedbeds.” Capt. White is to be commended for preserving these old-time memories, not to mention his filial privilege to chronicle the travels of his father. “Honour the pioneers.”

When farming operations were well established at “The Reedbeds,” Samuel White, with his brother William—then small boys—followed their father to Australia in 1842. The delightsomeness of the new country, especially its fauna and flora, soon captivated the imaginations of the youngsters, and they must needs explore far and wide as opportunity afforded. Their first important trip was up the River Murray, 1863. The same year Samuel undertook a daring trip into Central Australia. The hardships were beyond description, but science benefited by one new Wood-Swallow—Gould's type of *Artamus melanops*. After another excursion up the Murray, in 1865, Samuel essayed the dangerous task of crossing the head of Spencer Gulf in a “flatty,” which nearly cost him his life by drowning. But he seemed rewarded by the “great find of a new Blue-Wren,” which became another of Gould's types—*Malurus callainus*—for beauty of blues one of the most dazzling of birds. In 1867 the brothers were together again further afield. They landed at Cleveland Bay (before Townsville was), North Queensland, worked inland, then down to Brisbane. After crossing the wild Macpherson Range they overlanded to Melbourne by way of Sydney. This mighty trip was brimful of adventure, not to mention daring, meeting with ferocious natives, &c. Samuel was again “called” to the tropics. In a letter to his wife, under date Somerset (Cape York), 25th September, 1878, he wrote:—“I have just returned from a cruise among the islands of Torres Strait.” To crown all, he built a schooner (80 tons), the *Elsea* (named in honour of his wife), and in 1880 equipped and commanded a scientific expedition to New Guinea and the Aru Islands. This was Samuel White's last voyage, and the brief and racy accounts of Birds-of-Paradise, brilliant butterflies, and remarkable reptiles fairly enthral the reader. The end of the expedition came with dramatic suddenness, as is recorded in cold type on page 92. “Samuel White joined his wife in Sydney, and had only been there a few days when, on the very day he arranged to purchase a home on North Shore for his wife and family, while he was away to finish his expedition, he caught a chill; inflammation set in, and on the 17th November, 1880, there passed away one of the greatest field ornithologists

the world has ever seen." The pity is that the field observations of Samuel White have not been all recorded, and the mass of material collected, much new to science in those days, had not been worked out.

[*"Birds of Our Bush, or Photography for Nature-Lovers."* By R. T. Littlejohns and S. A. Lawrence, with an Introduction by J. A. Leach, D.Sc. Illustrated from photographs by the authors. Melbourne, Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington, N.Z., and London: Whitcombe and Tombs Limited.]

"*BIRDS of Our Bush*" is a good title to a well-written book, and indicates that its youthful authors will rise to great things "in the open field." It is a double-barrelled book, dealing with bird-observing and photography. The field observations are exceedingly good, not to mention some hitherto unrecorded facts in the life-histories of familiar species.

The photography part, as stated, is only for beginners in nature photography. The authors do not pretend to teach one's grandmother to suck eggs. Details and experiences are given in a breezy and attractive style, while obstacles are surmounted—weary waitings for models who never posed and wet camp-outs are mere nothings. Of the many fine pictures, perhaps the best three are the "White-browed Wood-Swallow (frontispiece), Swallow (p. 32), Nests of Fairy Martins (p. 87). The flowers that prettily embower the Spinebill and nest (p. 121) might have been named. "In the Haunt of the Lyre-Bird" (p. 193) the soft sylvan scene leaves much to the imagination, and is a true photo-art picture of a difficult subject. From the nearness of the camera to the chief object, and the rapid exposure necessary, some of the bird pictures are technically under-exposed, but they are nevertheless useful to demonstrate the natural pose of the bird, &c.

There is a well-merited introduction by Dr. J. A. Leach, of the Royal Ornithologists' Union, wherein he draws attention to the importance of the field work of Messrs. Littlejohns and Lawrence, and mentions their connection with the Gould League of Bird-Lovers of Victoria. It is hoped that these youthful authors will keep true to their hero, John Gould.

There are several royal roads to the study of Nature; therefore there are other ways than the one we choose for ourselves. Nature is *one* spirit, but has *many* manifestations—"In diverse forms a common soul we see."

One of the best pictures in "*Birds of Our Bush*" is the Tomtit near Nest (p. 66), but the hypercritical will say it is unnatural—an Australian bird perched on a plant (furze) introduced from the northern hemisphere! However, the authors are to be congratulated on their bright bird book, while the publishers (Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs Limited) have left nothing to be desired from a printer's point of view, and typographical "eyesores" are conspicuous by their absence. Copies of "*Birds of Our Bush*" may be had direct from the publishers, 189-191 Little Collins-street, Melbourne, price 12s. 6d. (postage 3d. extra).