

RECENT LITERATURE.

Muschamp's 'Audacious Audubon.'—It might be supposed that with the numerous biographies of Audubon already on our book shelves, the subject had been exhausted, but Mr. Muschamp, in the present volume,¹ has demonstrated conclusively that this is not the case. Personally we have always felt that there had been too much of hero worship in connection with Audubon, and that the measure of the man himself had not been properly taken. His biographers have been friends and relatives, necessarily prejudiced, or scientific men seeking the detailed facts of his life. Now we have an analysis of Audubon, the man, by one who is not an ornithologist, not a scientist, and in no way beholden to his subject—but who finds in Audubon a remarkable character; not for his scientific knowledge—which was really not great; nor for his artistic ability—which was marked; but for his audacity in conceiving and carrying to completion a gigantic work, and in stimulating an interest in bird life the extent of which it is difficult to estimate.

The trait of audacity, says Mr. Muschamp, he possessed "to a veritably superhuman degree and through its possession he survived innumerable perils and triumphed over seemingly insurmountable obstacles and in the end achieved so far beyond the measure of his conscious talents—remarkable as they were, that even while he still lived he was recognized and crowned as one of the world's outstanding geniuses." Audubon does not suffer at Mr. Muschamp's hands, but the really important points in his character are constantly brought into prominence, while the hackneyed details of his life are touched upon only as incidental to a proper understanding of the man himself. The result is a fascinating biography which, throughout, holds the attention of the reader, and will undoubtedly bring to many thousands a vivid picture of a man of whom previously they knew little or nothing.

Mr. Muschamp's keen insight has picked out two of the most important factors in Audubon's success and pays them full credit—Madame Audubon, his step mother, and Lucy Bakewell Audubon, his devoted wife. He admits that the indulgence and generosity of the former to Audubon, the boy, was theoretically entirely wrong, but adds "one is forced to the conclusion that but for this very treatment, throughout those most impressionable years of his life, the spirit that was to gladden and enlighten the hearts and minds of millions of his fellow men would in all probability have been broken and crushed, and the bud that was John James Audubon would never have come to flower."

Of Lucy Audubon he truly says, "Audubon was three times blessed for

¹ *Audacious Audubon. The Story of a great Pioneer, Artist, Naturalist and Man.* By Edward A. Muschamp. Brentano's New York, pp. 1-312, five illustrations. Price \$3.50.

Lucy Bakewell Audubon not only loved him and had absolute faith in him, but in addition she was a very paragon of practicability. She took upon her shoulders virtually the entire responsibility of supporting herself and her children and carried the burden for many years, and when the time came it was Lucy Bakewell Audubon who provided the big part of the fund needed to launch John James Audubon upon his epochal undertaking."

We have to thank Mr. Muschamp not only for a fascinating sketch of a remarkable man but for the opportunity of viewing a familiar figure from a different point of view—through new glasses as it were, and his book will for these reasons attract the attention not only of ornithologists but of a great mass of readers who enjoy good writing and interesting personalities. A word must be said also on the thoroughness with which the author has covered the literature of his subject, for the chapter on bibliography and acknowledgements includes practically everything that has been written by or about Audubon. The publishers too have done their part, both in typography and binding, to produce an attractive volume.—W. S.

Chapman's 'My Tropical Air-Castle.'—In 1918 the reviewer prepared a report upon a collection of birds secured by an engineer of the Panama Canal and thinking that with the opening of the Canal there might be persons visiting the Zone who would desire a knowledge of its bird life, he included a list of all the species hitherto recorded from the territory. Little did he dream of the almost instant demand for his *separata* or of the wonderful developments along ornithological lines that have taken place in the few years that have intervened.

There has been established in the Zone, as most of our readers are aware, a research station where properly accredited students may be comfortably located on an island, Barro Colorado, covered by virgin forest, which is maintained as an absolute sanctuary under control of the Government, and conducted by the Institute for Tropical Research in America. Every year we find in one publication or another valuable contributions to science presenting the results of the intimate study of tropical wild life made possible by this station. And every year teachers and students in our universities and museums gain knowledge and inspiration from a personal contact with the tropics which formerly was unattainable.

Mrs. Bertha Bement Sturgess, realizing fully the demand for a Panama bird list, published last year her 'Field Book of the Birds of the Panama Canal Zone' and now comes Dr. Chapman's fascinating volume 'My Tropical Air Castle,'¹ in which he describes his experiences at Barro Colo-

¹ *My Tropical Air Castle. Nature Studies in Panama.* By Frank M. Chapman, Curator of Birds in The American Museum of Natural History. Illustrated with drawings by Francis L. Jacques and from photographs by the Author. D. Appleton and Company. New York, London. MCMXXIX. Pp. i-xv + 1-417. Price \$5.00.