

LAST OF THE CURLEWS. By FRED BODSWORTH.
The Museum Press. 10s. 6d.

Six lines under the heading "Accidentals" at the end of Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom's "A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe" describes the eskimo curlew (*Numenius borealis*). The description ends with the words "now virtually extinct". This lovely bird, which had been observed in its thousands by naturalists towards the end of the eighteenth century, was to join those several species which passed from abundance to a state of near or complete annihilation during the last half of the nineteenth century—victims of man's rapacity and love of killing for its own sake. According to L. L. Snyder the last reported sight record of two eskimo curlews was made at Galveston, Texas, on 29th April, 1954. Sergeant Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., reported that he had seen quite plainly what he took to be a mated pair and this was published in the *Auk* an American ornithological journal.

Around these facts and as the fruit of his own long study, Mr. Fred Bodsworth has written *Last of the Curlews*. It is the story of the migration of the last eskimo curlew, from the far north of the Canadian tundra south to Tierra del Fuego and then, the following spring, north again, including its meeting with a mate and the senseless killing of this mate by a Nebraska farmer. The story must, of necessity, be fiction in its details. But so minute is Mr. Bodsworth's observation, so loving and exact his writing, that in its larger aspects it must be true. The book ends on a note of almost unbearable poignancy. It is beautifully written, beautifully illustrated by T. M. Shortt and beautifully produced. It leaves one asking yet again the question—how can man, who is capable of producing, in so many ways, so much beauty, also destroy it so needlessly and wantonly?

M. D.

BEETLES. By Jr. B. BECHYNĚ. Thames and Hudson, 1956.
250 illustrations—48 in colour. 18s.

This book, first published in Germany, has been ably translated by C. M. F. von Hayek for inclusion in a series of Open Air Guides and is intended to help those inclined to an interest in beetles.

A great deal of very useful information on the subject has been packed into the one hundred and fifty odd pages. Many of the larger and more conspicuous British species, as well as a few