

one would scarcely expect—he is an ardent student of history, and a prodigious memory enables him to expatiate with authority on the great leaders of the past.

Snakes do not constitute the sole theme for there is much of interest about the country, local customs, such oddities as the stilt dancers, duck-billed women and the whip scorpion, as well as Africa of the past; and, in particular, about the changing Africa. The illustrations are wonderful and those in colour, superb; if one had to select one for special mention there is little doubt that the choice would be the green mamba “making her magical rope-bridge through the air”.

C. R. S. P.

THE CURIOUS WORLD OF SNAKES. By ALFRED LEUTSCHER. The Bodley Head. 13s. 6d.

This is a small book about snakes, nicely illustrated by Barrie Driscoll, though why the publisher's blurb should describe these illustrations as “a dramatic accompaniment to the text” I cannot imagine.

The first half of the book gives some general information about snakes; the second half describes, in no very great detail, some particular species in various parts of the world. The book is intended for children—not younger than nine and not older than fourteen I would say—and a child with an interest in natural history, or a dawning interest in snakes, might enjoy it. It would, however, be of no use to him as a reference book and this is, I think, its weakness. The book is not detailed nor informative enough and there is really no attempt at scientific classification or description. Latin names are not given. When a snake is shown with another creature—as for example the anaconda with a coypu—this animal's name is not given and this might be irritating to an enquiring child. The book is unlikely to be read by any but an enquiring child and for this child it would, I think, be unsatisfying.

In format the book is rather like the Puffin picture books but these are, of course, far more precisely informative and detailed. They also cost less. 13s. 6d. seems to me too much for this book. It is agreeable and, in its limited way, interesting.

M. J. D.

OKAVANGO. By JUNE KAY. Hutchinson. 21s.

Here is a book that is a simple account of travels through Africa by an author interested in natural history. Unfortunately it has been boosted right out of its own class and into one for which it is not qualified by the addition of an introduction by a well-known television personality. Without the introduction the book could have been dismissed as an entertaining and very readable travelogue. If a book of this type must have an introduction, obviously the introducer will say it is a good book, but to imply that it is good because most of the others are bad is a peculiar form of praise, and to say that five times is unnecessary.

The purpose of the travels is never very clearly stated, though there is a suggestion of photography and observation. This is not borne out by the plates, out of seventeen photos only three are of wild life and those three are disappointing. There is also a suggestion of fauna preservation—in the dedication—but much of the text is concerned with crocodile hunting. Nor is the attitude of the people concerned very consistent. For example, on p. 77 a hyena is shot as “vermin”, when doing nothing more harmful