

REVIEWS

DOCTOR JIMEK I PRESUME. By BERNHARD GRZIMEK. Thames and Hudson, Ltd. 16s.

Dr. Grzimek is in charge of the Frankfurt Zoo and for some years he has rightly been considered one of the ablest Zoo directors in Europe. He is a thoroughly practical man, a vet. by training, and he is more interested in the living animal than in its anatomy and pathology. He pays periodical visits to various parts of the tropics, partly to bring back new specimens but principally to learn for himself how some of his charges live in the wild and this book is a translation of his account of a recent visit to the French Ivory Coast. The German title is *Flug ins Schimpansenland*, and it is a pity that the English publishers were not content to translate this instead of looking for some more catchy phrase.

His books are very popular on the continent and some have run into many printings. His powers of observation and vivid description come over clearly in this excellent translation by R. H. Stevens. I wish only that the translation had been scrutinized by a technical authority, thus avoiding such minor errors as iguana, paviane apes and African skunks. The author must not be blamed for these or a few other similar mistakes.

Dr. Grzimek rightly draws attention to the inroads made into the tropical African forests every year by farmers and the effect of this destruction on animal life, especially on the larger species of mammals. His suggestion that the primeval forest is thousands of years old is correct in only one sense; it is likely that few of the actual trees are much over a century old and when farming is discontinued rapid regeneration takes place. Serious damage is done when steep slopes are cleared or when land hunger reduces the period of "forest fallow" to a year or two, instead of the ten years that is more usual.

The French territories are distinctly ahead of the British colonies in West Africa, in that they have made some serious efforts to protect their animal life and have set aside some areas which are sanctuaries not only in name. In particular the I.F.A.M. has established an absolute sanctuary near the borders of the Ivory Coast and French Guinea, into which entry is allowed only for scientific study. A fine, well equipped institute has been built alongside the area for the use of approved visitors. Here Dr. Grzimek and his son stayed, obtaining some of the very few photos ever taken of chimpanzees in their natural state. Living conditions for much of this trip were very poor

indeed and the pair should consider themselves lucky not to have brought home more tropical germs than they did.

Dr. Grzimek observes his fellow men, whether black, white or coloured, as accurately as the animals and the whole book makes thoroughly good reading. It has twenty-two excellent photographs, including a wild adult male chimpanzee and a wild forest elephant, but the original German edition has three times as many pictures, all of them in photogravure or colour, and some entertaining end-paper maps.

G. S. C.

OUR NATIONAL PARKS. A Guide to the National Parks of the Union of South Africa. Published by the National Parks Board of Trustees of the Union of South Africa. Pretoria. 5s.

This comprehensive little paper-backed volume, covering many aspects of the national parks of the Union of South Africa, forms a competent guide. In spite of destruction that still takes toll of the nation's fauna and flora, "the wild life and plants of their country . . . hold an ineradicable fascination" for South Africans. This is evidenced by the fact that, of the 91,000 visitors to the Kruger National Park in 1954, a large proportion were of Afrikaans stock. It is, therefore, but fitting that this guide should be written in both official languages. The print is clear, and the few minor irregularities of English are of little consequence. Not only is the book admirably factual, but imagination is shown in the addition of unusual items of interest, such as the translated meaning of native place-names, stories about lions, and historical notes that impart a feeling of the veld and the old trekker days.

Anyone having intent to visit the national parks of the Union would do well to arm themselves with a copy of this guide for, apart from enumerating the five parks and the amenities to be found in the various camps, it gives useful notes on the question of reservations, routes, equipment required and suggestions as to conduct (no mean advice when visitors have been known to throw beer bottles at lions in order to see them jump)! The historical background of the National Parks Administration is given, also details regarding some of the game most likely to be seen. The book is illustrated with numerous photographs of camp sites, birds, mammals, trees; efforts, too, have been made to interleave it with advertisements that fit attractively into the theme of open-air life.

P. S.