

## REVIEWS

D'ARCY WENTWORTH THOMPSON, THE SCHOLAR-NATURALIST, 1860–1948. By RUTH D'ARCY THOMPSON, with a Postscript by P. B. MEDAWAR. London, 1958, Oxford University Press. 25s.

For three generations of zoologists—in turn as a contemporary, a teacher and an almost legendary presence—“D'Arcy” was an outstanding figure. During sixty-four of his eighty-eight years he was Professor of Natural History in the University of St. Andrews. One remembers him in his prime—the imposing physique, the flaming beard and the grand manner; one recalls the rolling periods of his oratory, switching easily into French or German; one can still relish his lucid prose.

The range of his learning was prodigious. He was a naturalist, a mathematician and a classical scholar; and it has been justly said that these roles were integrated as a harmonious unity. Thus his translation of Aristotle dealt with natural history subjects and he compiled glossaries of Greek birds and fishes. And he brought mathematical and physical concepts to bear in his major contribution to biological thought—his famous “essay” *On Growth and Form*, of which Professor Medawar here contributes a critical appreciation.

The main part of the book is a straightforward biography of Sir D'Arcy Thompson by one of his daughters. It begins with his forebears, his childhood and his education; it proceeds through the years of his long academic career, describing his varied extramural activities and recounting his many honours. It should appeal widely as the story of a notable personality, and most of all to those with interests of their own in natural history.

For over forty years D'Arcy Thompson was scientific member of the Scottish Fishery Board, and as such he took an active part in the work of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. In this sphere he could indulge his love of the sea and use his powers of dealing with people and practical affairs. In the present context special mention may be made of his service as United Kingdom representative on the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry into the Behring Sea Seal Fishery. His visits in 1896 and 1897 gave the still young professor a memorable experience of one of the wilder parts of the earth. The Commission made valuable recommendations about control of the slaughter of fur-seals on the Pribiloff Islands; and in his own report Thompson made a strong plea for the protection of other animals, especially the sea otter. L. T.