

We must remember that *Serengeti Shall Not Die* is intended for popular reading and that much further information will be given in the scientific publication which is now in print. This book is intended, above all, to focus attention all over the world upon the Serengeti so that every future government of Tanganyika shall legislate to its advantage. It is being translated into eleven languages.

The Serengeti, from Ngorongoro to Speke Gulf, is one of the most remarkable and interesting natural sites on earth and all who know it will support Dr. Grzimek's plea that with its animals, it must escape destruction.

W. H. P.

SNAKE MAN, The Story of C. J. P. Ionides. By ALAN WYKES.
Hamish Hamilton. 21s.

This astonishing story, its main setting in Africa, concerns one of the most remarkable characters ever to have set foot in what is still to a great extent the Dark Continent. In a land of myth and magic where sinister occult influences play an important role in everyday life, Snake Man's skill in capturing with ease large and deadly species such as mambas, cobras, Gaboon vipers and puff adders, was regarded with fearful awe by the highly superstitious natives, who were convinced that he exercised supernatural powers. The old beliefs die hard in an Africa where as yet education has made little real impact. Ionides, a master of his peculiar craft, will long be spoken of and the tales of his prowess are unlikely to diminish in the telling.

As a field naturalist of repute he has made notable contributions to herpetology by the discovery of new species of African snakes and lizards, as well as by the general study of reptilian habits. By trial and error he has had to work out the most effective methods of snake-catching—and there can be little margin of error permissible with a deadly species. The tale of the taming of "Popkiss", the puff adder, has a macabre flavour and tempts one to wonder, should one meet Snake Man, what he has concealed in his shirt!

Although it was snake-catching which eventually became his hobby and ruling passion, he has been privileged to hunt most of the rarer large mammals which are found in the African continent. This was not done in the acquisitive spirit of the trophy hunter, but strictly for scientific purposes on behalf of museums. One feels that the narrator with advantage could have

recorded less about hair-raising episodes with deadly snakes and concentrated more on Ionides' successes in the collection of rarities such as: Barbary sheep, Nubian ibex, white oryx, addax, mountain nyala, Nile lechwe, yellow-backed duiker, bongo, mountain gorilla, nyala, okapi, giant forest hog and Hunter's hartebeest. These are species which are found in an incredible diversity of habitat, and with highly varied and interesting modes of life; their present status and future prospects merit special mention. Doubtless, in view of Ionides' thoroughness of preparation and application, he must have made sufficient observations in the course of these lawful expeditions to provide material for a valuable scientific contribution.

It is with deliberation that one has recourse to the qualification "lawful", for on his own showing this scientific collector also indulged in many a poaching adventure, and he is as expert at poaching as he is at snake catching.

Though the principal theme is Africa, hunting and snake catching, there are also extraordinary stories of his school-days, Sandhurst and life in a British regiment in India. At school he well deserved the sobriquet "Ironhides" from the imperturbable manner in which he took his frequent chastisements; at Sandhurst he developed poaching into a profitable pastime; while in India his idiosyncrasies and peccadilloes shocked his brother officers and outraged the Colonel.

Contemptuous of authority and intolerant of officialdom, frustrations have always acted as an irritant; above all he is an able rebel, and it is the able rebel who can be a menace to his fellow creatures. A fine shot and expert hunter, utterly fearless and with exceptional powers of endurance, his uncanny resourcefulness has extricated him from many an awkward situation.

But the exacting conditions of the life he leads have inevitably subjected him to misadventures and to a variety of insidious tropical maladies. An unlucky encounter with an elephant seriously impaired his hearing, while an acute physical disability in his later years has almost deprived him of his powers of locomotion, but not of his ability to catch snakes. However, he makes light of such afflictions, and characteristic of the man his powers of recuperation are amazing.

Finally, mention must be made of "the hat", revolting in aspect and fit only for the garbage heap; in Africa Ionides is never without it and it has effectively helped to capture many a dangerous snake. What a story *it* could tell.

C. R. S. P.