

THE PROUD EAGLES. By MARY PATCHETT. William Heinemann.
21s.

Lanny Regan was a boy living in the out-back who was handicapped with a deformed foot. His great joy was to watch the wedge-tailed eagles that lived—and died—on the land where his father farmed. There were neighbours also with farms, and their attitude to eagles and other forms of wild life varied. So the book, after a slow start, develops into a natural history saga, with eagles as the heroes and heroines, and the daily adventures of Lanny forming the continuum. The daily routine of the eagles, their nesting, courtship, care of the young and hunting activities are all told with great care for detail. The cause of wildlife protection is served by a well-drawn contrast between the farmer who callously and stupidly wages incessant war on all wild animals in a grim and perverted manner and the more reasonable attitude adopted by Lanny's father.

Although, let it be confessed, this is not the type of book to which I would normally go for my natural history, I must pay the author the compliment of saying that once started, I found myself compelled to read on. As a piece of literature *The Proud Eagles*, by Mary Patchett, will probably rank high, but my faith in the fidelity of the writing began to waver when I read how Lanny had thrown an empty bottle at the foot of the tree containing the eagle's nest, and how the parent eagles nobly tried to beat out the flames started by the bottle and died in the attempt to keep the bush fire from their nest.

It may be that the Australian sunshine is stronger than it is here, but I believe it is the case that our Fire Service here has carried out exhaustive tests as the result of which they have discarded the idea that grass fires are ever started by glass bottles or broken glass in any form, in Britain, at least. For my own part, I have carried a series of similar tests with the same result. Furthermore, unless the behaviour of eagles is markedly dissimilar to that of other birds I find it difficult to believe they would try to beat out flames with their wings, especially when those flames were at the foot of the tree containing their nest.

However, I read on, with the thought that Mary Patchett must know more about eagles than I do; and that I could be mistaken about the Australian sun and glass bottles. Later in the book, however, comes the following passage; "The fire burst seeds deep down in the ground and they would germinate when, after rain, spring burned in the trees . . ." Even a blow-

lamp played on the ground fails to destroy seeds lower than an inch or so. And in any event, seeds burst by heat would never again germinate. So, while I could still admire the poetic facility of the writing, I found myself unable to accept the book for its natural history.

M. B.

SERENGETI DARF NICHT STERBEN. By Dr. BERNHARD and MICHAEL GRZIMEK. Published by Verlag Ullstein, Berlin. Frankfurt. Wien. Price : D.M. 19.50.

Dr. Grzimek is a man of immense ability and energy. Not content with rebuilding Frankfurt into the finest European Zoo, with some quite outstanding structures, he finds time to do at least one major trip into the wilds each year. Each of these trips normally results in a best-selling book, while on two of them he has also organized the making of films.

His first film *No Room for Wild Animals*, and the book about it, have apparently been translated into at least seven languages, and they have already been mentioned in this Journal. *Serengeti darf nicht sterben* is the story of Grzimek's greatest venture; he and his son visited the Serengeti to do a census of the great herds of game found there, especially in the Ngorongoro crater. The census was mostly conducted from a light aircraft flown by his son Michael who was killed in a crash there two years later, his plane having hit a vulture which wrecked the controls.

An English version of the film, *The Serengeti shall not die*, is now being distributed in U.K. and the book will doubtless be translated in due course, but anyone knowing German will do well to get it in the original, for Grzimek has a very pleasant and interesting style and the book is packed with photographs, many of them coloured, as well as drawings and maps. There is much useful information on the problems of catching wild animals from motor cars and marking them so that their movements can be followed, as well as on the experimental use of narcotic guns.

Both book and film should help forward the work which this Society has been doing for many years now.

G. S. C.