BOOK REVIEW.

Our Enemy the Termite, By Thomas Elliot Snyder.

Comstock Publishing Company, Ithaca, New York, pp. xii 196, 57 illustrations.

In this book Dr. Snyder, senior entomologist of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine of the United States Department of Agriculture and one of the earliest members of our increasing band of termitologists, has given us a succinct and authoritative account, with abundant illustrations, of the caste system, feeding and nesting behavior, guests, parasites and fossil record of termites in general and of the more important of the nearly 60 North American species in particular, with detailed suggestions concerning the best methods, based on much observation and experimentation by the Department of Agriculture, of controlling their depredations. Owing to its brevity the account will probably find many readers who lack the time or inclination to peruse the larger volumes of Hegh and of the California students of termites ("Termites and Termite Control by Kofoid, Light and Others, 2nd edit. University of California Press). Dr. Snyder maintains with Imms and some other authors that the termite castes have a genetic and not a trophic origin, and agrees with Emerson that the worker caste is phylogenetically derived from the soldier. The student of other social insects will not fail to find in the first and second chapters of the book many interesting statements such as the one on page 5, that "termite queens in artificial colonies are known to have lived for twenty-five years," which is longer than the longest record (17 years) for ant queens, and the statement that termite eggs secrete exudates, one that may also be true of ant eggs, though not hitherto advanced by myrmecologists. Several of the illustrations are very striking, such as those of the similar egg-masses of the subsocial cockroach, *Cryptocercus punctulatus* and the most

primitive of living termites, *Mastotermes darwiniensis*, the figure of *Cryptotermes brevis*, with its phragmotic head, so like that of the ants of the subgenus Colobopsis, and the figures illustrating the great damage by termites to woodwork, books, clothing, shoes, firearms, etc. The systematist will be interested to learn that: "It may eventually be proven that new species of *Reticulitermes* are being evolved, i.e., there are now 'nascent' species, or species in the making. Certain species are very close morphologically, and races or sub-species exist with composite characters; close species may be merely variations! Or, since termites are plastic, or easily moulded, it may be that there is a tendency toward a mean, and in reality there are no sub-species."

As would be expected from so competent an entomologist, there are few errors in the book and these are unimportant. The term "zorapterids" (p. 19) is not correctly rendered by "wingless forms of life", if the author really supposed the first syllable to be derived from *zoe*, nor are the jaws of *Capritermes* "goat-like"; the species of Megachile and Euglossa (p. 98) are not "large wasps," but bees, and the authority for *Amitermes wheeleri* (p. 175) is not "Dean," but Desneux. The arrangement of the text might have been considerably improved in places and the style, though usually clear, seems lacking in vitality, especially in the last chapter, which deals with matters in which it is difficult to sustain a general reader's interest.

Cambridge, Massachusetts. W. M. Wheeler.
January 29, 1936.