

ANIMAL COURTSHIP. MAURICE BURTON. Hutchinson, London, 16s.

The theme of this book is that the whole of animate nature is driven forward by a creative drive of which evolution is a part and courtship one aspect. "Giving of gifts, exhibitionism, communal interest in the proceedings, rivalries and jealousies," have so much in common throughout the animal kingdom that only against an evolutionary background are they in the least understandable.

For the lay reader interested in natural history, but not deeply concerned with the whys and wherefores, a little too much space is given to pulling to pieces Darwin's theory of sexual selection, or at least the facts upon which Darwin based it. I think we can appreciate quite quickly that the reason a particularly handsome or brightly adorned male is successful in obtaining a mate may not be his mate's preference for bright colours. Rather is it that his greater virility causes both his colour and his success in competition with other males. But the result is much the same. Similarly, again for the lay reader, there is a little too much use of scientific terms—I had almost dared to say "jargon"—releaser stimuli, behaviour patterns, displacement activities; though I am glad to see that Dr. Burton does not subscribe to the idea that, for instance, all bird behaviour is automatic.

To me the great value of this book lies in the facts it gives and its descriptions of them, often beautifully illustrated by Jane Burton's drawings. The courtship of the grayling butterfly, of the yellow wagtail, of Cichlid fishes, of crabs and of many others. Here is a wealth of fine material excellently displayed. The courtships of invertebrates are perhaps the most extraordinary—we learn of the male carnivorous Empid which catches a smaller fly, enshrouds it with silk and presents it to his bride. Whether this gift stimulates the female sexually or occupies her so that she will not devour her husband or has simply a symbolic meaning is quite unknown.

There is the dawn of true courtship in the starfish and the snail and some of its most extravagant manifestations in the fighting fish of Siam and the birds of paradise.

*Animal Courtship* is a book which leaves one with something more than the sum of its contents. It left me with a feeling of the essential unity of all creatures. We are indeed "all of one flesh".

C. L. B.