

BOOK REVIEW

MY WEAPONS HAD WINGS. Hubert W. Simmonds. Percy Salmon, Wills, and Grainger, Ltd. Auckland, N.Z. 1964. 164 p. (Published privately by the author under patronage of the Fiji Society).

One of the benefits of travel is the opportunity to see and acquire items of interest that are not readily available at home. Curio vendors the world over assiduously endeavor to assure that no traveler returns home empty handed. All too often the treasured objet d'art excavated from the tomb of third dynasty Pharaoh proves to have come from a factory production line in some enterprising center of modern industry. Fortunately, not all travelers are losers. After chasing fireflies in New Guinea some five years ago Dr. James Lloyd returned home with a book—in addition to an ample store of knowledge about the life and behavior of New Guinea fireflies.

Being something of a bibliophile he had visited the only bookstore in the port city of Madang. Among the Bibles and religious literature he found an entomological book with the jingoistic title "My Weapons Had Wings." For the price of \$2.75 (Australian) he acquired a book that appears to have escaped the attention of scientific literature abstracting services as well as new book lists and reviews. He recently mentioned the book to me as one that contained a lot of interesting information concerning biological control. He then retrieved the book from his overloaded shelves and I was surprised to find it to be the autobiography of Hubert W. Simmonds.

Mr. Simmonds spent 17 years as Government Entomologist of Fiji and during these years organized and personally conducted explorations to find natural enemies of pests that had invaded the Fiji Islands. As a result of this work the coconut scale, coconut leaf moth as well as the noxious weed known as Koster's curse were controlled and constitute classic examples of biological control through introduction of natural enemies. After retiring in 1937 he interested himself in the problem caused in Fiji by an enormously abundant housefly population. In Java he found a histerid beetle, *Platylister chinensis*, that preyed on fly larvae. Imported into Fiji and Samoa it proved phenomenally successful and all but eliminated the housefly from these islands.

Interesting as this book is to entomologists—at least those of the biological control persuasion—it deserves a much wider audience. The author and his wife were keen naturalists and dedicated conservationists who worked to establish nature reserves long before ecology and endangered species became household words. In addition to entomology and natural history, Mr. Simmonds' comments on the social customs of peoples living on the islands and lands bordering the Pacific Ocean. Few pages lack some fascinating information of scientific or human interest. For example on page 93 we learn how a weed acquired the name of "Koster's curse." A young man surnamed Koster was asked where the weed first appeared. He replied, "On Parr's Place." Erroneously interpreted as pa's place the weed became known as Koster's Curse! So, if you can find a copy of this book—read it!

R. I. Sailer
Gainesville, Fla.