and (in 1929) of adenosine triphosphate as constituents of muscle tissue; the priority for the latter discovery is still disputed, and the credit is usually assigned to Karl Lohmann. The finding of these two substances initiated a decisive change in biochemical research on the physiology of muscle contraction and on carbohydrate metabolism. In 1930, SubbaRow received his Ph.D. in biochemistry. Fiske and he then turned to the search for the curative factor in liver for pernicious anemia. In the course of this work, SubbaRow became a consultant of Lederle Laboratories, where he went when his academic prospects at Harvard proved unfavorable. The longest section of the book is devoted to the competition between SubbaRow's group at Lederle and those at other American pharmaceutical companies (notably Merck) in the elucidation of the chemical structure of new vitamins and antibiotics and in the patenting of processes for their manufacture. Gupta gives a detailed account of the important contributions of the Lederle group to the determination of the structure of folic acid (pteroylglutamic acid) and to its chemical synthesis.

In the final section of the book, Gupta tells of SubbaRow's personal relationships, his religious beliefs, his hobby of aviation, and his troubles with the U.S. immigration and naturalization authorities. These vignettes, together with those offered in earlier sections of the book, give glimpses of a man who drove himself (and others) unmercifully to achieve success and recognition in a society that regarded him as an alien.

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Private Glimpses

Simple Curiosity. Letters from George Gaylord Simpson to His Family, 1921–1970. LÉO F. LAPORTE, Ed. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1988. x, 340 pp., illus. $29.95.

Through all of his vast and brilliant *oeuvre*, one searches in vain for a glimpse of the real George Gaylord Simpson. Even his autobiography, though truthfully presenting many aspects of his personal life, is primarily a "right-brained" review of his remarkable paleontological career. Only in this book of letters does one at last strip off the cloak of public narrative. Don't read this book if you want to learn more about Simpson's science; but if you wish to fathom more of the person behind the genius, get hold of it, for it goes far toward revealing the off-duty "George" and the beloved "G."

Among the most striking features of these

Simpson in the field. [From *Simple Curiosity*]

200 letters spanning 50 years are Simpson's wry wit and irrepressible creativity. More than his share of mental depressions and physical illnesses did not prevent his delivering brilliant book reviews, penetrating character analyses, original perceptions of local customs, philosophical digressions, and endless varieties of poetry, epigrams, and whimsy. The letters also bubble with illuminations, hieroglyphs, marginalia, and cartoons.

Three-fourths of these letters were to his sister Martha, four years senior to George; most of the rest, much more formal, were to his parents. Through most of his mature life he showed his love and respect for them by a stream of long epistles, most of them written on Sundays. The later years, during and after World War II, are not as well represented as the earlier years, and the contents here tend to be restricted to ordinary family business. Léo Laporte, the editor of these letters, has done an excellent job of transcribing and, when necessary, translating them. His brief introductions to the chronologically ordered sets of letters provide an excellent biographic framework.

The letters shed new light on Simpson's two marriages, the first as unhappy as the second was happy. Through half of this book Lydia, whom he married secretly while still a Yale undergraduate, is hardly mentioned until, four daughters later, during his long sojourn in Patagonia, Simpson determined to break with her. The letters reveal more of the wonderful relationship between Simpson and fellow scientist Anne Roe. Indeed, it is embarrassing to peep into the passionate coded postscripts from "G" in Montana to Anne in New York during the summer of 1935.

Although respected by colleagues, Simpson was often thought to be arrogant and aloof. Here we get flickers of how melancholic it was from the inside: "My life seems to be turning in on itself almost viciously. . . . I literally haven't a single friend in the world. . . . In spite of the fact that I write and speak with great ease and sufficient fluency, some item of my personality . . . makes intimacy on my part even with those who could eventually comprehend me and enjoy me, very slow to come by."

Simpson's early letters express great ambition to establish himself. By his postdoctoral year in London, however, he wrote his father, "It is less than two years since I published my first paper and yet it seems to me as if I had always been an accepted paleontologist." To his sister he viewed his work more cynically; for example: "I have now published two books and 53 shorter papers and all of them are lousy. I owe apologies to posterity." Likewise, "You seek beauty as I seek truth, and I fear, or rather hope, that you have the better of it. For beauty is plainly everywhere, while truth is—heaven knows where—and one has to

Sketch by Simpson from a set headed "Quelques uns de mes amis de la Floride." [From *Simple Curiosity*]

seek it with the tongue in one cheek to keep from going mad." He was equally cynical about the motives of most science: "The highest possible scientific motive is simple curiosity and from there they run on down to ones as sordid as you like." Yet he continued to enjoy his work, observing, "It is all very strange and thrilling in a way which is, I am afraid, incommunicable." To his credit, he never lost the urge to explain evolution and paleontology to nonprofessionals—perhaps to displace the "faith in Hearstian science," which he detested.

There are still many mysteries surrounding Simpson, but this book at last gives us some authentic glimpses into his formidable mind and his surprisingly warm heart.

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