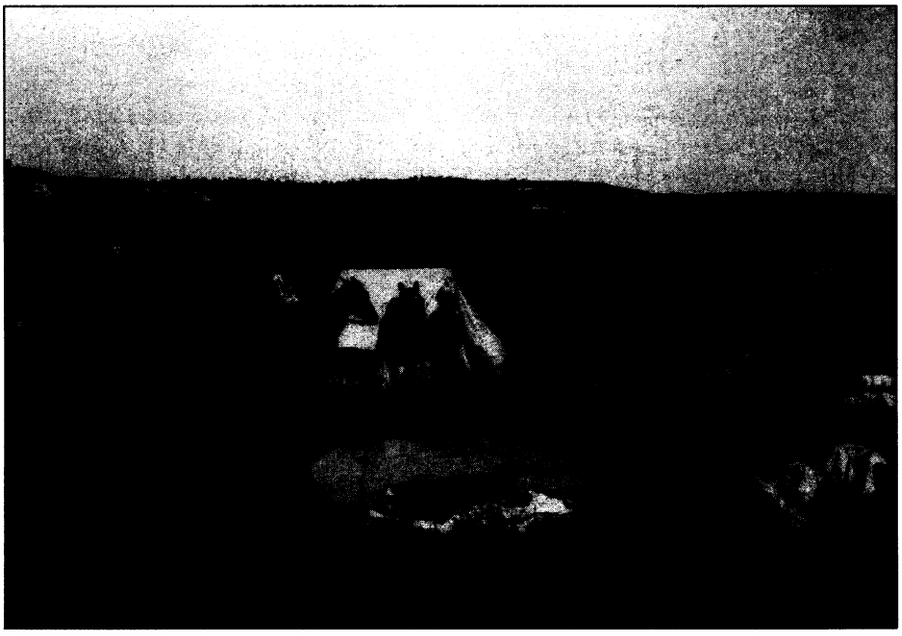

W. D. Matthew's camp on Porcupine Creek, South Dakota, 1906. "The sheet iron stove with its long stovepipe along with the wall tent, chuck wagon, and horses reveal a past perhaps forgotten or unappreciated by many present-day fossil hunters." [From *William Diller Matthew, Paleontologist*]

The biography's scientific strengths are Colbert's clear précis of Matthew's key paleontological monographs and papers, particularly those on the character and evolutionary significance of various Cenozoic mammalian fossils and the interpretation of the temporal ordering, paleoenvironments, and paleogeography of the fossil sequences, and his rendering of the local color surrounding Matthew's many field expeditions to the American West. The biography's weaknesses spring from an insufficiency of analysis of how and why Matthew came to differ so strongly from Osborn, among others, in his views about mammalian evolution and of how he anticipated much of what Simpson was later to contribute to the evolutionary synthesis. A more explicit discussion of the origin and development of Matthew's paleobiological conclusions would have been most valuable, especially given how well placed Colbert is to provide such an analysis. Fortunately, however, this shortcoming can be mitigated by reference to Ronald Rainger's recent biography of Osborn (*An Agenda for Antiquity*, University of Alabama Press, 1991), which has an excellent chapter on Matthew's original ideas in biostratigraphy and correlation, paleobiogeography, and evolution and how they fit within contemporary vertebrate paleontology.

The systematic development of Matthew's evolutionary thinking from an Osbornian evolution internally driven by aristogenesis to one environmentally mediated by natural selection leads one to wonder whether, had he lived just a few years longer, he would have preempted Simpson in bringing paleontology back into the mainstream of 20th-century biology. Although not explicit on this point himself, Simpson did acknowledge years later that he "was trained by Matthew at least as much as by [his] major professor, [Yale's Richard Swann] Lull." This biography deserves the attention of those interested in the more recent history of vertebrate paleontology as well as its eventual seating at the "high table" of modern evolutionary theory.

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