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41 YORK ST., SIDMOUTH, S.E. DEVON.

EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT

Bruce F. Cummings, referred to in the previous paper, was a figure of considerable scientific and literary interest. He was born in 1889 at Barnstaple, N. Devon, and was the brother of the late Mr. A. J. Cummings, who was for many years associated with the *News Chronicle*. B. F. Cummings wrote three books, *The Journal of a disappointed man* (first edition 1919), *A Last Diary* (1920), and *Enjoying Life and other literary remains* (1919). All of these were written under the pseudonym W. N. P. Barbellion, and were originally published by Chatto and Windus. The *Journal* is by far the best known and has been reprinted since the war by Penguin books. It gives a moving account of the author's early struggles as a provincial journalist, of his life in London after he had gained an appointment at the Natural History Museum, and of his protracted illness (disseminated sclerosis) which finally killed him while he was still a young man. *Enjoying life* is a collection of literary and scientific essays and includes one article on the distribution of British newts. He wrote at least one other paper on amphibians; this was called "The formation of useless habits in two British newts (*Molge cristata*, Laur., and *M. palmata*, Schneid.), with observations on their general behaviour". It appeared in the *Zoologist* (1910), 14, pp. 161-175, 211-222, 272. He also wrote a note on the "Occurrence of the small red viper in North Devon (*Zoologist*, 1912, 16, p. 38). His other scientific works included a pamphlet on the bed-bug and papers on the parasites of birds. A biography of him (*W. N. P. Barbellion*; 1926; pub. Parsons, London), has been written by R. H. Hellyar, but deals primarily with his literary rather than with his scientific work.

NOTES

LARGE SIZE OF A DEVON VIPER

PETER W. HOPKINS

On June 20th, 1957 (7.30 p.m.), two very large *Vipera b. berus* were found under a long piece of galvanized corrugated iron in a local allotments; of these, one was caught. The other has not since been seen, though frequent visits have been made to this spot. They both appeared to be of much the same size.

Captured specimen: Total length, 2ft. 2in.; girth at mid-centre 7/10ths in. Weight, just under 1 lb. Gravid female. Since presented to Paignton Zoo. In so far as Devonshire is concerned this appears to be an unusually large specimen, although Leighton (1901, p. 241, 255) refers to adult females of 27in. for this county. However, in eleven years, this is the largest adder I have seen and corresponds most favourably to the measurements of other large specimens. It may well be a present day record for Devon.

This specimen was, admittedly, stretched to record this length, though not unduly so. When measuring overall length there is considerable tension, an expansion-contraction force, exerted by the muscles which has to be counteracted at the exact time when the snake momentarily relaxes. At this precise moment the measurement can be taken.

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41, YORK STREET, SIDMOUTH, S.E. DEVON.

ACARINE PARASITE ON SAND LIZARD (*Lacerta agilis*)

By

ROBERT V. SKINNER

On a stretch of heathland near Studland in Dorset, a male adult Sand lizard was caught with a large parasite adhering to its body, just above the left foreleg.

The parasite was later removed, and found to be 3 mm. in diameter. The abdomen was hard and smooth, nearly spherical, and of a dark grey colour.

As records of this type of parasite occurring on lizards in the wild state are rare (see Smith, M. (1951) *The British Amphibians and Reptiles*, London: p. 284), it was preserved, and later identified at the British Museum as the nymph of a tick, *Ixodes reduvius*. This species is the common tick of sheep, but it will also parasitise most kinds of warm-blooded animals. The lizard was caught in September 1956, and as far as could be ascertained, there were no sheep within three miles.