
Earth Song—A Prologue to History. *Charles L. Camp.* University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952. 127 pp. \$5.00.

The sober matter-of-factness of most textbooks on historical geology and paleontology sometimes makes us wonder if their story is worth telling, if it can awaken any interest in their readers. Perhaps it is necessary, for pedagogic purposes, to write in a minor key, or perhaps the fashion of dignified restraint has become so ingrained in textbook authors that lyrical expression is unthinkable. Still, paleontologists are far from lacking in enthusiasm, nor are they a pedestrian, inarticulate lot. Somehow, though, the enthusiasm seldom emerges in their writings and the Hugh Millers, enraptured before a faultlessly preserved fossil fish, are rare in this twentieth century.

Charles L. Camp is one of the few who have tossed their academic cap over the windmills to write about fossils in poetic language. Such titles as "Tale of the Sea Rocks," "Black Death," and "Before the Mayflower" would have been rendered by a less imaginative writer as "Fossiliferous Sediments," "Fauna of the Tar Pits," and "Folsom Man and his Artifacts." It is not only the titles that bear the poetic touch. The entire text is written with a sense of wonder that seems to recapture the pristine awe of the pioneers of paleontology, who delighted not in reaching the ends of the Earth but the ends of time itself, seeking the strange creatures that first swam the seas. In this book, the majestic procession of life, from the algae of the pre-Cambrian to Man himself, passes in orderly review, with a realism that is refreshing after the over-sober presentation of paleontologic literature. If the story overemphasizes California life and events, that seems a small price to pay for the fresh and vivid way of telling the story.

AURELE LA ROCQUE.