

Rome and inspected for heresy; when changes were suggested, he graciously refused.) The reader traveling with Montaigne shares the author's melancholy sense of the vanities of prelates, kings, and travelers alike.

THE AENEID

by Virgil
translated by
Robert Fitzgerald
Random, 1983
403 pp. \$20

Some translations seem so "right" as to be set forever. John Dryden's 286-year-old "Arms, and the man I sing . . ." stands as the classic English rendering of the opening words of the *Aeneid*, announcing straight-away the poem's central conflict: between the iron demands of war and the more "human" demands of love, family, and comrades. Fitzgerald's "I sing of warfare and a man at war" comes as a rather lackluster successor translation. But despite the inauspicious beginning, Fitzgerald's handling of Virgil's poem proves to be as sure and (to the American ear) as natural as his earlier versions of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This is no small feat, since, in an epic, naturalness must not be gained by sacrificing the necessarily elevated tone. The epic, after all, speaks for a whole people, a nation. Readers must be made to feel the full weight of Aeneas's sacrifice when he leaves the beautiful Dido to get on with the brutal but necessary business of founding Rome: "*Duty-bound, / Aeneas, though he struggled with desire / To calm and comfort her in all her pain, / To speak to her and turn her mind from grief, / And though he sighed his heart out, shaken still / With love of her, yet took the course heaven gave him / And went back to the fleet.*"

Science & Technology

FROM ARISTOTLE TO ZOOS: A Philosophical Dictionary of Biology
by P. B. Medawar &
J. S. Medawar
Harvard, 1983
305 pp. \$18.50

Anyone who confuses meiosis with mitosis, believes theories and hypotheses are virtually the same thing, or simply savors odd bits of scientific arcana, such as the fact that the king crab, belonging to the *Arachnida* group, is closer to the spider than to the blue crab, will be well served by this unusual "dictionary." It is also a pleasure to read. Written by a husband-wife team, both Oxford biologists, the short-essay entries reflect the authors' un-

compromising professional standards. They show, for example, little respect for the scientific aptitude of the venerable Aristotle; his biological works, they write, are a "rather tiresome farrago of hearsay, imperfect observation, wishful thinking, and credulity. . . ." Ranging from barnacles to sociobiology, they also clear up a few old controversies, including the famous chicken-egg debate: To believe that the egg came first, they explain, is to be a "Mendelist" and "in the Western Hemisphere a trustworthy and regular guy (some compensation, perhaps, for the odium of being classified in the Soviet Union as a 'genetic elitist . . .')." The authors conclude with a good-humored cheer for zoos.

THE MONTGOLFIER BROTHERS AND THE INVENTION OF AVIATION, 1783-1784

by Charles Coulston
Gillispie
Princeton, 1983
210 pp. \$35



On June 4, 1783, in a small town in southern France, two sons of the wealthy paper-manufacturing Montgolfier family successfully launched the first hot-air balloon. Rising some 3,000 feet above the astonished citizenry of Annonay, the brazier-heated sackcloth globe drifted a mile and a half before gently returning to earth. Gillispie, a Princeton historian, has commemorated the aeronautic bicentennial with a charmingly vivid account of the inaugural liftoff and its early sequels. Among the latter: the first livestock-carrying flight, the maiden voyage of a hydrogen balloon (called "charlières" after inventor J.-A.-C. Charles), the first manned flight, and the first fatal crash. The two brothers Montgolfier—Joseph, an absent-minded inventor, and Etienne, a mathematician and practical man of affairs—occupy center stage, but a host of colorful characters fill out the drama. Benjamin Franklin, on hand for the first manned flight in November 1783, was asked what use the contraption could serve. "What use," he replied, "is a newborn baby?" Gillispie easily conveys his intimate knowledge of the era—of its learned societies and academies, of court life and rural politics. A wealth of firsthand commentary complements the period drawings and engravings of the first magnificent flying machines.