brought him to the notice of the trustees of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, who were looking to hire their first salaried museum curator (in effect, director). Blyth was chosen and he sailed to Calcutta in 1841, thus beginning 22 years of service. He inherited the Asiatic Society's miscellaneous collections made by Theodore Cantor, John MacClelland, and others, to which he added assiduously from donations and his own collecting in various Indian provinces and Burma. Owing to ill health, he returned to England in 1863 and died in London on 27 December 1873.

Most of Blyth's technical publications dealt with birds and mammals, and only a few were on herpetological topics. However, over the period 1841-1863 he produced a regular series of "Curator's Reports" which included extensive descriptions of numerous new species of animals including reptiles and amphibians, not only from India and Burma but also from as far away as China, the Philippines, and other places where Blyth had correspondents. Shortly after Blyth's retirement to England the Asiatic Society's collections were transferred to the newly-created Indian Museum where they were further studied by John Anderson, the museum's first director. Besides Blyth's interest in systematics, he published on biogeography, animal domestication, and the origin of species, and his observations were important enough to be regularly quoted by Charles Darwin in his "Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication" (1868). Blyth himself was a staunch Darwinist.

• *References*: "Edward Blyth," anonymous, Ibis, ser. 3, 4: 465-467, 1874; ["Edward Blyth"], by A. Grote, Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal, 44(2, extra no.): iii-xxiv, 1875. • *Portrait (1864) and signature*: From Grote, 1875.

AGASSIZ, Louis (1807-1873).

Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz, the renowned Swiss-turned-American naturalist, was born on 28 May 1807 at his father's parsonage in Motier-en-Vuly, Switzerland. Before the age of ten he was already a collector of fishes and plants, but his family planned a career for him in commerce or medicine. Fortunately, natural history was then a proper part of a medical curriculum, and Agassiz was for a long time able to deceive his family into thinking that he was studying medicine. After preparatory school in Bienne and Lausanne, he attended the University of Zürich (1824-1826) where his professor was Heinrich R. Schinz. He then went to the University of Heidelberg (1826-1827) where he was introduced to paleontology by Heinrich Bronn and to comparative anatomy by Schinz's former student, Friedrich Tiedemann. At the University of Munich (1827-1830) he was a student of the philosopher-naturalist Lorenz Oken and the herpetologist J. G. Wagler among others. Here, he was entrusted by C. F. P. von Martius with the fishes from the Spix-Martius expedition to Brazil, which Agassiz published as his first book (1829). This also served as his Ph.D. thesis (Munich, 1829, but examined at the University of Erlangen); in 1830 he also took a M.D. degree at Munich.

His book, dedicated to Georges Cuvier, served as Agassiz's entrée to the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, then the world center for natural history study, and to postdoctoral study with Cuvier himself. Agassiz had begun a work on the fossil fishes of Europe and Cuvier gave him all of his own notes for a planned similar project. This was a time of great excitement in Paris, for the Cuvier-Geoffroy debates on evolution were at their zenith, which had a marked influence on Agassiz. It was then, also, that he met Alexander von Humboldt, who became his patron and protector for many years thereafter. But the work in Paris came to an abrupt end when Cuvier died in May 1832, during a cholera epidemic. Although Agassiz had studied with Cuvier for not quite six months, he became his self-appointed successor and upheld the basic tenets of Cuvier's views on nature for the rest of his life, which had unfortunate consequences for Agassiz after Charles Darwin.

Agassiz became Professor of Natural History at the new College of Neuchâtel in Switzerland in 1832, thus beginning the most scientifically productive phase of his life. His "Poissons Fossiles," which included descriptions of 1700 species of fossil fishes, was published over the period 1833-1844. In 1837 he made his announcement of the existence of a prehistoric Ice Age, which he later published in book form (1840). These accomplishments were not without controversy, however, from colleagues and even his own students who claimed credit for much of the work and ideas.