

Book Reviews

The Environmental Revolution: a guide for the new masters of the world, by **Max Nicholson**. Hodder & Stoughton, 84s.

I always wondered what would happen to the world when the super-abundant energies of Max Nicholson were released from the daily shackles of guiding the Nature Conservancy. Now his two post-Conservancy books—so different from his six pre-Conservancy ones on birds—are beginning to show us. The secret revolutionary, fastening limpet bombs on the undersurface of respected institutions, is succeeded by the open and avowed revolutionary calling for the *bouleversement* of accepted practices and thought processes that is absolutely essential if human society is to reach the 21st century with a reasonable prospect of surviving to the middle of it.

The first half of this book is a sermon, and like so many other sermons in that it could have been expressed more succinctly, and that it is likely to be heard by many more of the converted than of the unconverted. Conservationists need to read the first half only the better to equip themselves with the message: that society at large, political, economic, religious, simply must take notice of what ecologists are saying about the effects of modern technological civilisation on the environment. When this message has been read and digested by 90 per cent more of the unconverted than of the converted it will have succeeded; it is up to us, the conservationists, to achieve this aim.

The second half is a badly needed history of the conservation movement since Teddy Roosevelt launched it at the turn of the century. (I know he was anticipated by many centuries by St Cuthbert, but the saint's countrymen can only be ashamed of not having followed his lead for so long). This part is so good and readable that it reinforces my feeling that not only historians but nobody else ought to write sermons. A good pamphlet is what we need now. Is it too much to ask Max to condense the first half of this book into 5000 words of a really fighting pamphlet that could have a circulation of millions?

RICHARD FITTER

Darwin and the Beagle, by **Alan Moorehead**. Hamish Hamilton, 75s

A detailed account of the voyage of HMS *Beagle* and its impact on Charles Darwin and his writings, this book vividly describes the places visited, the hardships endured by the ship's company and the trials and tribulations of the whole expedition. The author has amassed an exceptionally fine selection of 50 colour and 138 black-and-white plates which could virtually stand as a book in their own right.

But there are minor errors, at least in the chapter on the Galapagos. Marine iguanas do not have webbed feet, as the entirely accurate plate shows, despite Darwin's statement that all four feet were partially webbed; it is a pity that the opportunity was not taken to point out that, good an observer as he was, Darwin was not infallible. The flightless cormorant and Galapagos penguin were not described to science until 1898 and 1871 respectively, neither are they mentioned in the *Voyage of the Beagle* or *Journal of Researches*; it would be interesting to know where Darwin reports having seen them and why he did not collect them if indeed he did record them. On a more general level, the modern scientific names should surely have been used in the captions to the plates, or at least it should have been stressed that the names used are out of date.