

**NATURE AND THE AMERICAN: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes.** By HANS HUTH. University of California Press, 1957. 250 pp., 64 plates. \$7.40.

The stated purpose of this book, in the author's words, is "to present the basic developments which led to the conservation movement" in the United States. His definition of conservation is "the husbanding of natural resources; that is, the developing of these resources in accord with the best public interest, restoring to productivity those that have been depleted and guarding them against further depletion". Primary emphasis is placed on æsthetic appreciation of the environment, while current problems in conservation are considered only as they are "necessary to complete the story".

The book is an original contribution to conservation literature because it documents the way in which Americans have reacted to nature throughout their history. This reaction began early, with Colonial figures realizing the potential influence of the settlers upon natural resources. In 1681 William Penn admonished the people to "leave an acre of trees for every five acres cleared" and expressed the hope that Philadelphia should be "a green country town". Dr. Nicholas Collin wrote that "our stately forests are a national treasure" and he called for "preservation and increase of the timber for fuel and domestic purposes".

In the early 1800's there was an accelerated consciousness of the need for resource care. When one of James Fenimore Cooper's characters saw the passenger pigeons being shot, he said that "the Lord won't see the waste of his creatures for nothing" and he also felt that dragnetting bass was "fearful expenditure of the choicest gifts of providence". Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that "the interminable forests should become graceful parks for use and for delight". Artists like George Catlin, who travelled up the Missouri in 1832, hoped that these regions "might in future be seen . . . preserved in their pristine beauty and wildness, in a magnificent park", and William Cullen Bryant expressed the new approach to the contemplation of nature with his poem "Thanatopsis". Later writers like Thoreau, Burroughs and Muir, well known for their appreciation of nature, are treated significantly in the book.

The author does not limit his treatment to individuals, but recognizes social reaction as well. Writers and artists who helped make Americans aware of their new country in the first half of the nineteenth century—the Romantic Period—did a great deal to encourage people to go into the country for rest

and play, largely as a summer diversion, and later to travel widely, first by stagecoach and canal, later by elegant steamboats and by rail. The second half of the century was a less idyllic, more factually inquisitive period. A crescendo of impact upon resources from expanding industry and agriculture caused growing concern, culminating in 1864 by the publication of *Man and Nature*, by George P. Marsh. This book, in later editions entitled *The Earth as Modified by Human Action*, was the first realization of "the basic importance of conservation and the nature of its extraordinary and complex pattern".

One of the chief values of *Nature and the American* is that the book places in historical perspective much of contemporary American activity in conservation, especially that dealing with parks and forests. One might wish for a parallel treatment of American agricultural history as it led to modern soil conservation and watershed management to round out the picture, but that story was outside the author's purview. He does recognize, however, that man's interpretation of nature during the first two centuries of American history was quite a different matter from what it has become since, and in the final chapters he briefly treats present societal impacts upon American resources as a whole. Public opinion is now on the side of the conservationists, the author concludes, and conservation is the great need of our time—something for which mankind must put up "a fight which can be waged in a spirit of optimism".

The book is well illustrated, both by twenty-six vignettes and sixty-four full-page plates of the changing American scene, most of them paintings and line drawings antedating the photographic era. There is also a coloured frontispiece—a reproduction of Winslow Homer's "Ascent of Mount Washington". The art work was made possible by a grant from Resources for the Future. The author, Curator of Research at the Art Institute of Chicago, with an avid interest in nature, was uniquely prepared to choose the illustrations and write the text. Each of the twelve chapters is documented by numerous references; there is a ten-page bibliography and an index.

E. H. G.

THE TRAVELS OF WILLIAM BARTRAM. Naturalist's Edition edited by FRANCIS HARPER, 1958. Yale University Press. \$8.50c. London: Oxford University Press. £3 8s.

In the middle of the eighteenth century John Bartram, of Philadelphia, founded a botanical garden, from which many