

## ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE HIGHLANDS AND HEBRIDES

### Natural History in the Highlands and Islands

By Dr. F. Fraser Darling. (New Naturalist Series.) Pp. xv+303+64 plates. (London and Glasgow: Wm. Collins, Sons and Co., Ltd., 1947.) 16s. net.

**T**HIS is a notable book about Scotland north and east of the Highland Border Fault, where much that is wonderful and unique in Nature still flourishes; its case for a new deal for the Highlands and Hebrides, because it is developed on detailed ecological considerations, and its humanism (without 'bogus romance'), also make it a different kind of book. The author, rightly esteemed for his biological researches in the region and for his present labours as director of the West Highland Survey, is almost certainly the one man possessing the qualifications to attempt it.

The first three chapters deal with geology, climate, relief and scenery, the other nine with human and animal factors: forest, moor and farm; hill summits; shore, sea, loch and shallow seas; islands; freshwaters; red deer; grey seal; and reflexions on main issues. There follow a long bibliography, index and fifteen distribution maps by Dr. James Fisher.

The book merits the compliment of searching criticism. The reviewer and biological colleagues agree that, much though they welcome its advent, a longer gestation and more consultation with specialists would have given it better proportion and minimized the number of blemishes. The citation of even typical slips and errors regarding altitudes, distribution, nomenclature, cross-references, etc., would occupy too much space here; such will be communicated to the author. Those using the book scientifically require, therefore, to be warned of the necessity for checking details by reference to authoritative sources.

Certain matters of printing craft cannot be so passed over. The plates, mostly, are original and very attractive; everything possible has been done with many of the coloured photographs, but it is disconcerting to see two colour plates (18 and 23, review copy) half an inch out of register. Regarding the black-and-white illustrations, perhaps the paper used is the best obtainable now; but it does not appear to be the most suitable, the plates often being flat and dense (for example, III, review copy). Another copy shows duplication of bibliography, one index page, and maps.

The sentiments and style of the fine concluding chapter deserve applause. The author speaks of his loved country "with its power, colour, variety and movement; the diversity of living forms and the delicacy of their inter-relations"; of its sufferings and despoliation following the two revolutions that struck it—the coming of the sheep after the destruction of the forests, and the delight in game preservation which practically meant the killing of common mammals and birds without reference to their life-history. "Let us," he says, "give beast and bird and flower the place to live *in its own right* unless pest or obnoxious parasite."

What is being done about it all? Promise of much lies in the concern expressed by those in high place (the Secretary of State for Scotland and others) for schemes of forestry, national parks, crofting and hydro-electricity. But progress would be speeded and intensified by the co-ordination of such schemes, by the education and "active work of ordinary folk,

of people who visit the Highlands and of those who live there"; and, with all this good will, by the institution of "a trained wild-life service, a corps of men working on natural history, studying phenomena and forecasting consequences and gaining a knowledge of the dynamics of natural populations".

Despite its shortcomings of detail the book is a gallant effort, much needed, stimulating and highly successful. Its appreciation by the reviewer and a colleague (neither Scottish) is measurable by the fact that between them they bought a dozen copies as gifts to laymen and younger naturalists.

A. D. PEACOCK

## POLITICAL TESTAMENT OF AN ANTHROPOLOGIST

### Freedom and Civilization

By Bronislaw Malinowski. Pp. xiv+338. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1947.) 16s. net.

**B**RONISLAW MALINOWSKI died in the United States in 1942 leaving a number of unfinished manuscripts in various stages of development. Two of these, "A Scientific Theory of Culture" (reviewed in *Nature* of August 25, 1945) and the present work, to some extent overlap. "Freedom and Civilization" may be regarded as a war-time political manifesto superimposed on the body of anthropological theory expounded in the earlier volume. This topical quality is manifest in the introductory section, "Political Prelude", and in the first chapter of Part 2 entitled "What we are fighting for". It is therefore unfortunate that the book-wrapper of the present English edition should give the impression that the book is an 'objective' contribution to political philosophy.

Objectivity was never Malinowski's method. Like all great teachers, he was prone to generalize recklessly from a special instance in order to drive home a point of principle. Some of the categorical assertions of this book are startling and would be hard to justify by any 'objective' criterion; for example, "a regular, systematic or tyrannical abuse of authority is not to be found under primitive conditions" (p. 118), or "in primitive communities the magician . . . always inspires the community with a consciousness of discipline and with the faith in leadership" (p. 213), or again, "headhunters and cannibals cannot loot because there is no portable or accumulated wealth at that stage" (p. 281). But such statements seem to me to be not so much unverifiable assertions as decorations to the general argument.

This argument is the declaration of a political *credo*, a statement of liberal positivist faith in the human spirit which belongs to the tradition of J. S. Mill's treatise "On Liberty" or Condorcet's "Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain". The latter perhaps is a particularly appropriate parallel, for it was written in the war-time Paris of 1793, a few months before its author's death.

Approximately one third of the book is devoted to a critical examination of the concept of freedom, and to the selection of a range of meaning for this emotionally overloaded term which will satisfy the author's requirements. This long discussion of what is largely a problem of semantics could with advantage have been well pruned in final draft. The sequence of the argument thereafter appears to rest on the