

BOOK REVIEWS

LAISSEZ-FAIRE, LAISSEZ DÉTRUIRE

Man and Environment

Crisis and the Strategy of Choice. By Robert Arvill. (A Pelican Original.) Pp. 332+13 photographs. (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967.) 8s. 6d.

MUCH that we admire in the English landscape—the trout stream, the parkland of the great estate, the grouse moor, the college garden, the mixed farm of arable and grassland, thick hedges and planted coverts—was created for the benefit of the few. It was created generally by an autocratic minority for their exclusive use and enjoyment in perpetuity and was deliberately designed, often with protective measures bordering on the ferocious, to exclude the many.

Modern democratic principles insist, and rightly, that recreation in the widest sense and the enjoyment of the whole environment shall be the preserve of the whole nation. The increased leisure, the affluence, the train (as Wellington tactlessly pointed out) and latterly the car enable millions to travel to places where 50 years ago only a few could afford or were entitled to penetrate. I believe that the countryside will have to become, as the theatre and football match have become, a place of restricted entry unless it is to be destroyed by the multitude. Payment for entry to a National Park will have to become as commonplace as payment to enter any other place of entertainment.

The increase in population of the British Isles, or of other affluent countries for that matter, is only a trivial factor in the increase in pressure on the countryside. It is widely, but erroneously, assumed that were our population stabilized at, say, the 1900 figure no problems of vandalism, waste disposal, air and water pollution, housing pressures on land and all the other nastiness associated with industrial societies would arise. They would, in fact, all occur, but at a marginally lower rate. The principal pressures are industrial demands, ever increasing standards of individual affluence and leisure time, increased energy requirements, the spread of democratic principles and, above all, the invention of the car.

Mr Arvill investigates in great detail the effect of these increased pressures on the air, the water and the wildlife populations of our countryside. He places, I think, too much emphasis on the problem of population pressures and insufficient on some of the other villains of the piece. He makes excellent suggestions for immediate and future conservation and does not make the common mistake of believing that conservation consists of putting a fence around certain animals and plants with a label saying "Keep Out". He believes, as we must all come to believe, that conservation is the antithesis of preservation and should comprise a mutual adaptation of the environment to ourselves and ourselves to the environment. He does, I think, less than justice to the planners in Britain, who, in the past 20 years, have housed more people, accommodated more industry and permitted more exploitation of the environment with less relative damage than virtually any other country in the world. This is some recompense for the unlimited and uncontrolled damage inflicted in the 150 years up to 1939.

The book has an excellent bibliography with a catholic taste, a good index and a high standard of production throughout. I do not think that, with his condensed text and unlimited homework, Mr Arvill will achieve many conversions, but he will certainly educate, encourage and provide ammunition for the converted. B. E. JUNIPER

HISTORIES OF TECHNOLOGIES

Technology in Western Civilization

The Emergence of Modern Industrial Society Earliest Times to 1900. Vol. 1. Edited by Melvin Kranzberg and Carroll W. Pursell, jun. Pp. xii+802. (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.) 68s. net.

THE editors of this volume have attempted, with considerable success, to move forward from the tradition of encyclopaedias in the history of technology towards a viable textbook. The very definition of "technology" is nearly impossible, and whatever it is, it has complex relations with the whole of human activity and thought, so that a satisfactory history will require a great scholar as yet unknown. In default of that, the editors have at least produced a scheme of organization from which some historical understanding can be derived; and within its framework they have obtained essays of generally high quality from their specialist contributors. Implicitly acknowledging the contemporary interests of their audience (in the first instance, the US Armed Forces Institute), they assign bulk and detail in proportion to the historical proximity of the periods studied; thus the past two decades of the nineteenth century receive just as much space as all history to 1600. Within the limits of space of each period, they provide studies of the social economic and cultural aspects of technological history. For the more recent periods, when the authors do not need all their space to review the well worn generalizations, this material can be illuminating.

But one is still left with a multi-layer sandwich. There are the good histories of particular technologies (divided up in a traditional scheme) and the good discussions of the preconditions and effects of technological change in the economic and social spheres. But, with the partial exception of the most recent period, there is little attempt to capture the flavour of the technical endeavour of any period. One cannot but compare this work with Klemm's *History of Western Technology*, which makes no claim to comprehensiveness, but which gives a vivid picture of the conception of technology in various milieu, through its carefully chosen extracts from original sources. As a textbook for an advanced course in the history of technology of recent times, this volume serves well; but for an introduction to this most important and most difficult sort of history, one will still fall back on Lilley, Mumford or Klemm. J. R. RAVETZ

FUNGI NEAR MR MacGREGOR'S GARDEN

Fungi, Wayside and Woodland

By W. P. K. Findlay. Pp. xi+202+50 plates. (London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co., Ltd., 1967.) 65s. net.

IN the past fifteen years a considerable number of books, richly illustrated with coloured plates, have become available which help the field naturalist to identify the larger fungi. This book in the "Wayside and Woodland" series adds to their number, but it has a special quality because rather more than half of the forty or so coloured plates are the work of Beatrix Potter. It may come as a surprise to many that she was a serious and knowledgeable amateur mycologist, and indeed in the nineties of last century read a paper to the Linnean Society on the germination of agaric spores. But the environment of her books, which with the Bible and Shakespeare have played such a formative part in the literary style of my generation, is not so different from the habitat of toadstools. Peter Rabbit and his sisters who, it will be remembered, "lived with their mother in a sandbank, under the root of a very big fir-tree" must have admired *Russula*