

Reviews

The Review Section of E&A consists of three parts. The first is made up of brief reviews of books and articles (and perhaps films etc.) which are concerned in some way with the rights and wrongs of human treatment of non-human animals. These reviews will be both critical and reportive--primarily reportive in the case of most scientific and historical material, and increasingly critical as the material is more argumentative and philosophical. The second part of this Section is entitled 'Second Opinions' and contains second (and usually dissenting) reviews of works reviewed in the first part in earlier numbers of E&A. After a review appears in E&A (and after the 'second opinion' if one appears within the next two numbers) the Editor will invite the author of the original work to submit a brief rejoinder to the review(s). Rejoinders received will appear in the third part of the Review Section. Members of the SSEA who wish to submit reviews (first or second), or recommend works for review, should contact the Editor.

Books

DAVID CREATON, THE BEASTS OF MY FIELDS, (ST. MARTIN'S PRESS), 254 PAGES, \$8.95.

Writing in the animal-lover tradition of authors from England such as Gerald Durrell, Alex Duncan, James Herriott and David Taylor, David Creaton comes across as a struggling animal farmer some 35 years ago. The book is both highly entertaining and thoughtful for the "farmer" in many of us. Some of this spirit is captured in the following passage:

"So I reckoned I'd got nearer to farming than any of my ancestors. At any rate none of them were farmers. They seemed to be sensible men and sensible men don't farm. It's the romantics who do, and those who can't help it because they're born into it. Sensible men work from nine until five and live in a warm house close to all amenities. They don't get wet through, or feel the frost grip their fingers, or work in the sun with sweat in their eyes, or lie awake listening to the storm. Farmers are made fools of by Governments and Nature. They moan at the weather, groan at the prices, and grumble at the middle man's profits while thinking up new ways to quieten the bank manager. Yet they never believe there is any other worthwhile life. Sensible men can't understand this, save those who thrill to the sight of new grass in spring, an unlicked lamb, or a cow warm in a bed of straw in winter."

The book is written in four sections--by seasons--and this serves to remind us of the continuing struggle of man and beast. For example, no one could have explained correctly all the problems that first Autumn associated with hand milking including big teats, small teats, kickers with a dirty foot in the pail, a warning whip round the ear with a filthy tail, etc. Winter (the longest part of the book) revealed cold weather could be disastrous for farmlife in more ways than the cold

...watching pheasants retch themselves to death after someone had baited them by carefully knotting a strand of horse hair around a pea and they had the misfortune of swallowing it.

...or baiting pheasants late at night with wheat and a few raisins. So in the morning the half-awake pheasants flopped down from their perches to gobble up the food. So on for the second and third days until the next night the poacher buried a fish hook into each raisin and fastened each one with a slim, brown line to a stout pole--picture the rest.

...Instead of carrying water to the dairy herd when the water pipes froze in the cold, drafty barn, the cowman untied "Big Tits" and drove her out. She slipped and broke her leg forcing the knacker man to later put her out of her misery by shooting her between the eyes.

...Little Willie, the pig, lived a life of luxury as he munched his way towards an early death. Ernie, for a few schillings would come to the farm to kill and dress a pig. Ernie forgot his humane killer so he borrowed an axe "and addressed Willie's skull like a golfer preparing to drive" (Ernie pined for the days of the outlawed pole-axe).

Spring is highlighted by Sadie, the pup, finally asserting her dominance and chasing away an old hen who seemed to own the farm. Cosmetic docking of lamb's tails was being done in those days, too. On a lighter vein, Summer meant haying, visits from urban matrons and David Creaton courting Jean, his professional rat-catching wife-to-be.

The book is a must for those who like the romance of an earlier time. Still, were the animals treated any better then than they are now? I am reminded again of what Dr. Ron Kilgour from New Zealand has written, "It is, in fact, very difficult to legislate for welfare in all cases. It is only possible to regulate to prevent gross abuse." (The Application of Animal Behavior and the Humane Care of Farm Animals by R. Kilgour. Journal of Animal Science, Vol. 46, pages 1473-1486, 1976.)

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