

Book Reviews

The Education of Nations: A Comparison in Historical Perspective.

Robert Ulich. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1961. xiii + 325 pp. \$6.75.

Robert Ulich's book on the educational systems of five modern nations, including Russia and the United States, is particularly well designed to bring understanding, for he begins with a review of the nearly common heritage of 700 years, from the high Middle Ages to the age of industrial democracy. At every point, moreover, the author suggests parallels or makes analogies that show without didacticism how tightly linked the educational practice and the cultural assumptions of a period or country are. He is as ready to speak of our judgments of modern art in connection with the technological revolution as to speak of Pascal and Kierkegaard in a paragraph about the integration of science into the world of moral ideas.

If one adds to these evidences of a mind able to move easily and aptly within the realm of intellect the fact that *The Education of Nations* is written in ordinary English, which is to say, nowadays, extraordinary English, free from jargon, preciousness, or affectation of any kind, one is led to conclude that here is an uncommon work of manifest utility. The many persons from every walk of life who are at the moment gravely concerned about American schools would do well to provide themselves with a little detachment and perspective by assimilating the contents of Ulich's survey. They would find it assimilable, I am sure, not only by virtue of its lucid prose, but also by virtue of its unhurrying pace and quiet tone. Though serious from beginning to end, the work is a kind of *causerie* by a man who has read much, a man who remembers what he once read rather than copies out what he has just read. He never presses too hard on the point

he makes or the conviction he is moved by.

And this perhaps is the only weakness of the work, at least for readers who have a good grasp of the intellectual history of modern Europe and who have some acquaintance with the recent debates about education in England and on the Continent. Such readers are charmed by the author, and instructed in certain details (particularly about Russian education), and occasionally led to doubt or disagree; but they are not stirred into sharing a vision of past, present, and future. I do not mean that Ulich lacks an individual voice. He is a finely tempered rationalist, who balances reason with moral and esthetic sensitivity. He is a cosmopolitan mind of that rare sort to whom internationalism is a positive premise, not a means of expressing ill-digested resentments. No one would want to upset this urbane equilibrium by a greater dose of partisanship. But what one would wish from so competent a guide, from a spirit so self-aware and judicious, is—if I may press the image of judgment—a stronger charge to the jury.

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Sea Birds. Charles Vaucher. Translated from the French by James Hogarth. Oliver and Boyd, London, 1960. 254 pp. Illus. (225 photographs, 15 in color). £5 5s.

This English edition of *Oiseaux de Mer* (Delachaux and Niestlé, Paris, 1958) is primarily a remarkable collection of well-reproduced photographs, almost all of them of birds which breed exclusively on oceanic islands or coasts; but the text is well written, and the introductory chapter, "Islands of the birds," and the 14 chapters devoted, respectively, to the fulmar, the cormo-

rant, the shag, the gannet, the common eider, the shelduck, the arctic skua, gulls (four species), the kittiwake, terns (seven species), the razorbill, the guillemot, the puffin, and the oystercatcher, ringed plover, and turnstone are not to be dismissed as mere accompaniment or *obligato*. I have listed these names to make clear which sea birds are dealt with. As the author states in his foreword, the book is concerned only with certain species, notably those which live on the Farne Islands off the coast of Northumberland, Bass Rock and Tentsmuir Point in Scotland, the islands of the Stockholm Archipelago, and the islands near the biological station of Tvärminne in Finland. The peregrine falcon, which often preys upon the sea birds of northern Europe, is not discussed.

Coverage of the above-named 25 species is not equal by any means, the decidedly photogenic adult gannet being represented by no fewer than 26 photographs, including three striking color studies, one of which is used as a frontispiece and also on the dust jacket. Admirers of Vaucher's photographs of flying gannets will be hauled down from ecstasy by the humble little portrait of a 3-day-old gannet, which reminds one of a singed, decapitated hedgehog. I studied this photograph a long time before I found the creature's head. Finally, convinced that the eye was nowhere visible, I realized that what I had been calling the back of the neck was the top of the head and that the slightly opened bill was pointed almost straight down. Another nonphotogenic subject, the rock pipit (page 245), is the only passeriform bird pictured.

Three photographs are of seals on the Farne Islands, and several photographs are of the shore with its waves, limpets, barnacles, seaweed, "polished rocks," and spider crabs. When I first looked at the lower of the two pictures captioned "Molluscs and seaweed carpet the rocks" on page 24, I misidentified some of the "molluscs" as cliff swallow nests. I continue to be disappointed that the handsome little alcid known as the black guillemot, the bird the Eskimos call the *pitseolak*, is represented by only one photograph, and this a not particularly distinguished one. But what *Sea Birds* lacks in black guillemots is compensated for by seascapes as thrilling as the oil paintings of Frederick Waugh, by a remarkable twosome showing the wing-tip patterns of the herring gull and common gull (page 138), and by many action studies of birds in flight.