

The author does not take too gloomy a view of the future. In particular he sees rays of hope in the work of the county naturalists' trusts and in education. "Our schools and universities are the only force that can transform successive generations of young people to be vitally aware of their surroundings and to use them wisely." He concludes "Every year it becomes evident that many more people *do care*." This book should do much to add to their number.

JOHN CLEGG.

Complete Atlas of the British Isles. Reader's Digest, 75s.

This superb production, complete with a foreword by Admiral of the Fleet the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, KG (why does nobody believe nowadays that good wine needs no bush?) is the atlas to end all atlases of the British Isles. It covers the whole of the British Isles, including all Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Isles, and gives a staggering amount of geographical, topographical, historical, climatic, biological, demographic, sociological, agricultural, economic and other miscellaneous information, together with a gazetteer which even gives my own village in the Chilterns, so it must be good. The task of assembling, digesting and arranging this vast mass of information is such a remarkable achievement that it seems a great pity that the publishers have not seen fit to acknowledge the contributions of the writers and editors. What a pity, too, that the distinguished naturalists mentioned in the long list of consultants were apparently not shown the proofs before publication, for they would hardly have passed such statements as that the orange tip is the earliest spring butterfly, that the rare *diapensia* (whose single British site is in West Inverness-shire) grows in Sutherland or Caithness, or that the peregrine "chiefly hunts woodpigeon and red grouse." And a good many other statements could have been phrased more accurately.

RICHARD FITTER.

Animal Conflict and Adaptation, by J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson.

C. T. Foulis, 42s.

Like the scholar gypsy, the author travels far at a learned pace, exploring the whole field of man's wisdom and giving us glimpses of the country of his scientifically trained mind. His argument is that adaptation through conflict for food and living space is as beneficial as it is inevitable.

He opens by discussing life where it began in the sea. Conflict in the littoral habitat resulted in respiratory independence of the sea, and so to a terrestrial life; and eventually, for some animals, even harsh desert conditions. The book is packed with fascinating incidental information: the camel does not store water in its hump; there are black earthworms in the snows of Kashmir and Kilimanjaro; jumping spiders can live at 22,000 feet; some centipedes drop a leg which writhes and squeals all on its own while its owner makes off on the other (uneven number of) legs in another direction.

Without inter- and intra-specific conflict an important aspect of natural selection would vanish; and the lethal viruses and bacteria play an essential part in the ecological scheme of competition and adaptation. It is quite anthropocentric to regard cannibalism even among human beings as abhorrent; or, in animals, as "an expression of the lowest depths of utilitarian turpitude." After all it is one way of controlling population, although less effective than man's looming alternative of nuclear conflict, which in 2000 A.D., the author reminds us, will provide a lot of space for the survivors of the possible 5,000 million people—that is if they survive the radioactivity. The author pleads for the conservation of natural fauna which are often more productive of meat than introduced domestic breeds,