It had been quite an easy and interesting trip in entirely new territory.

Later the male members set off by car to take important photos of the mountain, but they were away a suspiciously long time. It's to be hoped they have some really good ones to prove their case. That night came packing, waiting for and catching the train home for most of the party. A lucky few stayed on to go further afield, but somehow it seemed dead after the party broke up and we few were glad to get away early next morning.

If this account of the joys and pleasures that party had at Ohakune makes you feel envious and now wish you had gone, remember not to miss out next time: if it has that effect it has been worth while writing.

Arthur Farnell

Members, the Editor hopes, will endeavour to read that important book "A Pelican in the Wilderness" (George Allen & Unwin). The author, Dr. Frazer Darling, one of Britain's most noted naturalists and ecologists, and a most doughty champion in the cause of nature conservation and wild life protection gives a delightful, if disturbing, account of what he saw and heard on a visit to the United States and Mexico and later to Alaska to study the complex problems of the husbanding of the land's biological resources. And these problems must be tackled on a broad basis.

"As I see it" he remarks, "there is only one ecology, plant associations are so greatly affected by animals and most animal ecology is meaningless without constant reference to the plant field, and as such a large part of the earth's surface is influenced by man we must be prepared to develop human ecology". He brings to his journey searching experience in Britain. "My work in the West Highland Survey ..... had brought this out as a central theme or chain - deforestation and its consequences, pastoralism and a lack of balance between cattle and sheep, the sheep always taking more than they could give, the gradual deterioration of the habitat with the economic and social collapse of the West Highland region".

In America he saw all too often the familiar spectacle of the ruin brought by overgrazing, disasters caused by homesteading, the heartbreaking effects on men and land of attempts to speed the plough where the plough can bring only desolation in its train. Dangerous and far-reaching effects caused by upsetting the balance of nature are described and accounts of the destruction of valuable areas through the depredations of deer have an all too familiar ring. But the story is not all dark, "The idea of conservation has already received the impact of American idealism" and much fine work is being done.

To mention only one instance, Wallace Grange, a distinguished wild life ecologist, bought up some thousands of acres of ruined and abandoned farm land in Wisconson, eventually bringing it back to a more or less natural condition. It is now alive with wild animals and birds. "Ruffled grouse and sharptails are trapped alive.... beavers and musk-rats are increasing. There are skunks, raccoons, squirrels and many small animals. The estate makes a remarkable bird sanctuary .....Wallace Grange has shown on a large enough scale as an individual that the ecological philosophy of letting land yield that which it is most able to yield is practical politics, and the only policy if one is thinking in the long term".

He quotes Paul Sears (author of Deserts on the March) as saying "The soundest ecological apportionment of the landscape would be represented by a minimum of skilfully operated plough land and a maximum of natural vegetation".

Of course human as well as scientific problems arise. Passing over the Sierra Madre region in Mexico and seeing the fields high up on the mountain slopes, Dr. Darling comments, "There is no bottom land. It may be all wrong that there are agricultural people here but the fact remains that people are here. What are they to do? Starve to death in the interests of soil conservation? Here is the old problem intensified, and I for one do not know the answer".

Of course America is not alone in misusing land. In this matter at least the nations are united. In fact he thought, at any rate in 1949, that "Britain was the most backward country in Europe in overt understanding of what biological conservation meant". As for the white man in Africa, he asked two English men of the Colonial Service in East Africa about native overgrazing. "One said it would be easy to talk to the native about improvement in his pastoral methods, but the native, not being blind, could see that the white man's methods were either equally bad or worse than his own". Dr. Darling speaks of two Israelis from Palestine who said "their desert had no palatable plants whatever. Exactly: 4000 years of overgrazing....." We must sympathise with him when he says "It is plain we do not know how to live as civilised beings without despoiling our planet".

But Dr. Darling's book is far from being merely a record and analysis of man-made desolation. He tells of inspiring contacts with scientists and the great leaders of conservation on the American scene, and they are indeed a goodly company. Moreover, travelling with him, we not only journey with a trained and disciplined thinker but with a sensitive and highly cultured man of wide sympathies and interests, - a humanist in the best sense of that much abused word. He speaks of beautiful forests, Indian Reservations, Mexican bullfights and Eskimo settlements and fascinating encounters with all sorts and conditions of men. Emphatically a book not to be missed. Unfortunately, like most good books today (paper-backs apart) it is expensive. But there are always libraries.