



# The BOOK TRAIL

## NATURE STUDY—PLUS

"Nature Lore, or Listen to the Voice of Nature," by Dr. H. P. K. Agersborg. Published by C. C. Nelson Publishing Co., Appleton, Wisconsin. 1941-1942. 6 Volumes.

If you are an outdoor person in the sense of one who forgets self in contemplation of the unique and the ordinary in nature, Dr. Agersborg's writings will make your future field trips more interesting. If you are one whose love of nature runs to reading more or less scientific accounts of the habits of animals and the nature of plants, you will want to add these six volumes to your library. If you are the athletic type to whom the naturally rustic is an opportunity for physical self-expression, here are recommendations whose adoption by our state and national agencies will improve your recreational sites. Indeed, every American will be a more intelligent member of our democracy if he reads H. P. K. Agersborg's analysis of erosion control and the conservation of soil, water, wildlife.

With the scientific information this Norwegian-American has to give, the reader must take a full measure of his moral concepts, for Dr. Agersborg is a warmly religious man as opposed to the pantheist. He says: "Listen to the voice of nature and you will hear truth." In effect: "Obey her natural laws and your problems will be solved, as they were intended to be." You may or may not agree unequivocally with him that only where the teachings of Christ have been accepted and practiced do we find the highest culture, the greatest blessings of civilization available to the common man. Certainly this reviewer is not enthusiastic over the poetic value of the author's occasional verse. But there is much technical knowledge presented in entertaining non-technical language in these small volumes intended to aid the high school and normal school student and young people's groups but of value to the adult as well.

Chapters briefly descriptive of some one animal sound like Uncle Remus sans dialect. Provocative shorts are headed: "Does the Bass Think?," "Matrimonial Standards of a Goose," "What Is a Bastard?" There are practical sections on the nature of food, the economic importance of predators, mosquito control, or suggestions for establishing a park museum, and much space is devoted to the author's favorite topic, aquaculture.

At present Dr. Agersborg is interested primarily in the problems of the modern United States, that are associated with restoring the productivity (economic and aesthetic) of millions of square miles of land which

have been despoiled needlessly, and preventing further similar waste. As a former member of the U. S. National Park Service the author is in a position to know what has been done in the way of conservation and reclamation of our nation's resources. As a biologist he points out the unsatisfactory program thus far followed by the government agencies, composed almost wholly of business men, engineers, foresters and some medical men but lacking in biologists. Attention to politics and good intentions backed by little scientific knowledge to date have wasted huge public funds. Dr. Agersborg urges the appointment of biologic specialists to these bureaus and a fundamental change in the attack on the job in hand. His analysis is painstaking and his recommendations are specific and exhaustive. It would seem that men such as Dr. Agersborg should be heeded in the interest of the public weal.

The more you leaf the pages of these books the oftener you will find yourself pausing to admire a fine illustration, of which there are very many, or examining critically a drawing of a plant or an animal, or reading of the significance of fences and old stone walls (when you become nostalgic). The author loves his work, to the point where the naturalist becomes the evangelist, and his spirit is catching. Nor does the attention to detail tire the reader for, following perhaps a lengthy piece "On the Nature of Sewage and Waste in Relation to State Park Emergency Conservation Work" he will find a page answering the question "What Are Seeds?" in so simple a manner that he is tempted to earmark the page for reading to the small fry when they put such a question. A homey account of Christmas in the land of the author's boyhood will balance some facts on sea-snails from the coast of Norway.

While the sophisticate may be annoyed with moralist Agersborg, some of the charm of these small volumes for the reviewer lay in such a bit as "A Turtle-Man" with which Volume V closes. . . . "People are sometimes like the turtle sitting by the roadside, waiting for the world-with-all to come to its door. They are quite satisfied with staying put, keeping what they've got, unaware that a fuller life, richer and stimulating, can be attained by merely risking one's neck a little. The fact is, humanity never has progressed except through the risking of someone's name, fame, and fortune. He who never dares to face his fellow's displeasure, because of his honest and sincere convictions in matters pertaining to life in general, professional, sociological, economical, religious, philosophical, or moral, is likened unto a reptile which sits by the roadside and ekes out a mere living; whereas, he who loses his job (life) for others will find it. One can live more fully for others, when one first risks in order to obtain a fuller life for oneself. The old adage: 'He who does not risk, cannot win,' is again demonstrated." Man was made to venture, and, as the author makes abundantly clear, the better his understanding and compliance with natural law, the more successful will his venturing be.

—FRIEDA WEHNES