

BOOK REVIEW

VIEWS FROM THE MOUNTAIN. Virginia Viney Smiley. 1971. Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, New York 12561. 59 pp. \$2.00

Subtitled *Responses to Nature and Man*, Mrs. Smiley's booklet is a collection of some of her nature and philosophical essays and sketches, and it is readily evident that she has a keen eye for all sides of the natural scene—birds, animals, butterflies, flowers and trees—and a real concern for our present-day problems of over-population, self-centeredness and pollution.

The essays are so finely done that it is difficult to pick out favorites, but I have grown very fond of *Evolution of an Addict* (page 9):

"I hate to admit it, but I'm hooked."

Those words marked the culmination of the evolution of a bird watcher, from scornful neophyte to addict. . . .

People who collect buttons and stamps, matchbooks and snuff boxes, are rarely the butt of jokes, possibly because these are acquisitive hobbies, and the urge to possess is strong in most of us. (but) What is so odd about standing transfixed while an indigo bunting explodes with song as brilliant as his plumage, from the top of an old dead pine? Can any rare collector's item be more exciting than cardinals and blue jays on the snow, or the annual influx of minute, exquisitely jeweled warblers which we have to re-learn every spring and fall because they are such a transient joy?"

And totally different from *Criteria of Behavior* (page 47):

"Long before the Sermon on the Mount, before the tablets of Moses, even preceding the ethics and morality of civilization as we know it, there was, we assume, a single selfish question which could serve as a guide to behavior: 'Suppose *everyone* were to do this; what would our village be like?'"

The question is even more valid today (but) Perhaps we don't think of it frequently enough. . . . In this age of over-population, if we will not be our brother's keeper in love, we will unwittingly become his plunderer in selfish extravagance of irreplaceable resources and pollution of the environment in which we all have to live."

To me these essays have an unforgettable quality and meaning, and I have enjoyed reading all of them and re-reading many of them and being stirred by them. This booklet should be a part of the library of anyone interested more than superficially in the natural world and in man's present problems.

JWT