

Weeds", which shows how most weeds are parasitic on agriculture and that even if they overwhelm man they cannot survive him, brings to an end a truly fascinating book.

C. L. B.

THE WATCHER AND THE RED DEER. By RICHARD PERRY.
William Hodge and Co., Ltd. 12s. 6d.

The author of this book, which is certainly different from the majority of books on this subject, has set himself the task of describing the everyday life of the Scottish red deer throughout one complete year and almost everything that one associates with red deer seems to have been crammed into its 188 pages.

Richard Perry is probably best known for his work amongst birds, and although this book might therefore be a departure from his usual field of study, the reader soon becomes aware that the "watcher" is treading familiar ground whether it be trailing up through the "Pass of Lochans" to see the autumn rut, or to the "Hill of Calves" where the hinds in June and July will be tending their offspring.

Perry lays great stress on the importance of heather on a deer forest, for not only was it "food in itself", but it "also spread a protective covering over mosses, lichens and berry-plants. . . . Heather was life to the deer. Without heather there would be no red deer, now that the forests had been felled and nearly all the low ground enclosed". He also draws attention to the danger of overstocking, for it was "the winter feeding that determined the stock a deer forest could carry".

Sound as many of his observations are, I wonder what evidence there is to suppose that during the winter months the tips of a stag's antlers are at one moment "so sensitive" and "at other times apparently insensitive to the most fearful blows"—or to believe that "a switch one year was capable of growing perfect antlers the next"? If it was correct, also, to say "that stags were neuter rather than male throughout their lives, except during the annual period of the rut" then one would expect that calves would always be born in June. Whilst the majority are most certainly dropped this month there are also instances of them having been born as late as November and December. And do stags in combat *really* charge at each other "hell for leather" from a distance of "fifty or sixty yards . . . to collide with a thunderous clash"? I think not.

His two chapters Winter and Spring are probably the best, for they cover a period in the deer's life that is witnessed only by



Photograph by G. Kenneth Whitehead.

A RED DEER STAG IN MAR FOREST, SCOTLAND.

Stags are in prime condition in September.

the hardiest of naturalists, except, of course, when storm and hunger have driven the deer from their mountain fastnesses to the glens where all decent folk can see and pity them in their plight. "Hunger had indeed tamed the hinds and they would stand gazing apathetically at him . . .". Fortunately *him* was "the Watcher" and not the poacher. These two chapters are worthy of study by all those who are interested in that most controversial of subjects, a close-season for deer. In his final chapter the author considers what the future holds for Scotland's red deer and his conclusions are logical and to the point.

Although I may have appeared critical on one or two points of fact, I found the book both instructive and entertaining. Perry writes easily and he has the happy knack of making the reader feel that he himself is crouched on the hillside alongside the Watcher and the red deer.

G. K. W.

DEER AND THEIR MANAGEMENT. By G. KENNETH WHITEHEAD.
Country Life Limited. £4 4s.

Prior to the publication of Mr. G. K. Whitehead's book, the only books dealing with deer parks and park deer were of such a very early date as to be of little more than historical interest. This is partly because many of the deer parks mentioned have long ceased to exist as such and partly because the generous winter feeding of park deer recommended by these early writers is unfortunately no longer possible.

Mr. Whitehead, as a result of much painstaking research, has been able to give a complete list of all deer parks in Great Britain and Ireland existing at the present time, together with interesting notes on their past history. The book is illustrated with many beautiful photographs taken by the author and contains much practical information with regard to the habits and care of the animals. Having had access both to Warnham Court and to Woburn Park, Mr. Whitehead has also been able to provide valuable information about the finest herd of red deer in the country and also about various species of foreign deer which were practically unknown as inmates of English parks in the days of the early writers.

BEDFORD.