

## First Glances at New Books

EVAPORATION—Alfred L. Webre and Clark S. Robinson—*Chemical Catalog Co.* (\$8.50). One of the "Modern Library of Chemical Engineering," a new series invaluable to all concerned in the chemical industries and to teachers who want to keep up with progress in industrial fields. It gives, on the one hand, the fundamental principles and mathematical data of the processes in full, and, on the other hand, their application to factories for beet sugar, cane sugar, paper making and the like.

Science News-Letter, December 18, 1926

THE CHEMISTRY OF WOOD—L. F. Hawley and Louis E. Wise—*Chemical Catalog Co.* (\$6). Cellulose has recently become a raw material in many chemical industries and it is very difficult to work up its complex chemistry from the diffused and confusing literature. This volume gives a comprehensive and well considered compendium of our present knowledge together with full references to the original papers. It explains how this fundamental substance will produce paper, rayon, sugars, alcohols, acids and plastics.

Science News-Letter, December 18, 1926

JUST TEN MINUTES. A Health Story—Eleanor Glendower Griffith—Illustrated by Jessie Gillespie. *Smith Hammond*. A fairy story for young children intended to point the moral of early to bed, milk drinking, and plenty of water inside and out.

Science News-Letter, December 18, 1926

DARWIN—Gamaliel Bradford—*Houghton, Mifflin*. (\$3.50). Charles Darwin's personality observed from a number of angles in a well written, intimate biographical study.

Science News-Letter, December 18, 1926

THE ROMANCE OF OUR WONDERFUL WORLD—P. J. Risdon—*Lippincott*. The evolution of the earth from the period of geologic chaos down to the present time described in a manner calculated to appeal to non-scientific readers.

Science News-Letter, December 18, 1926

A STUDY OF THE OCEANS—James Johnstone—*Longmans, Green* (\$3.75). A complete and useful account of the oceans, including early and recent explorations, the knowledge of the ancients, geology of the oceans, and their relation to civilization.

Science News-Letter, December 18, 1926

## GEOLOGY

### Earthquakes and Automobiles

Quotation from OUR MOBILE EARTH. By Reginald A. Daly. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mallet, the father of the science of earthquakes, estimated the lives lost through earthquakes during 4,000 years to have numbered 13,000,000. Nevertheless, the fame of seismic disasters is not due to the total damage occasioned by earthquakes. In part men are impressed specially because the human tragedies are concentrated in space and time. Of at least equal influence is the periodically renewed, nerve-racking discovery that the solid earth, the very symbol of stability and reliability, has treacherously failed. The horror of the earthquake is largely a matter of the imagination, often quickened to the breaking point of sanity. Hence, for more than one reason, man tends to exaggerate the relative damage done by earthquakes to himself and his works. As a corrective one does well to view that damage in relation to other scourges. We glance at the newest pestilence, the automobile. Mallet's estimated rate of killing for the whole earth during forty centuries is only one-sixth of the rate at which the automobile is destroying lives in the United States alone. When, in addition, we think of the infinite load of fear which the automobile has brought upon the responsible members of the American public, we see at once that there is no particular reason why we should become hysterical over earthquakes.

It is a question whether this chronic fear of the automobile, this imponderable damage to the happiness and health of the inhabitants of our country, is not a greater loss to our civilization than all the killings and maimings on our highways. Similarly, no statistician can declare the packed misery of the fateful minutes of an earthquake, nor the prolonged agony of personal and social reconstruction. He must fail to tell the story, just as art must fail. No Aeschylus or Dante can reach the heart of such a matter. It is as unimaginable as the drowning of a million men, women and children in a single flood of the Yellow River; as ungraspable as the Great War. However, the little part of the sorrow which the outside world can imagine, prompts almost unexampled sympathy, compassion, and remedial measures.

Men need not be content with remedial measures. Though seis-

mology, the science of earthquakes, is very young, we already know much concerning the nature of these movements and concerning the regions where they are important. Knowledge of their nature will help engineers and other men of business to build more stable houses, towns, railways, water-supply systems, and docks. Knowledge of distribution, especially with respect to the kinds of rock formations in the ground, will guide city fathers and statesmen in planning town sites, port facilities, and railway lines. The problem of forecasting earthquakes is intrinsically difficult, but some suggestions are in hand for at least a partial solution.

Not only has this new science practical bearing on human welfare; seismology has already thrown a flood of light on the nature of the earth's deep interior. That mysterious, hidden part of the planetary body dominates many of the processes that have made the surface of the globe what it is. Earthquakes traveling through the interior of the globe are like so many messengers sent out to explore a new land. The messages are constantly coming and seismologists are fast learning to read them.

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## GENERAL SCIENCE

### A Newton of the Soul

By SULLY-PRUDHOMME

To Newton, when an apple fell,  
The laws of Matter were revealed:  
Shall future sage arise to tell  
What in the Soul of Man is sealed?

And as there is in ether blue  
A point from which the worlds suspend,  
So souls of men—if we but knew—  
Are drawn to God, their Source and  
End.

And as the flaming spheres that turn  
With rhythmic greetings through the  
skies;  
The Soul Love's harmonies may learn,  
And toward its Center, glad arise.

But to the stars is not allowed  
Nor gentle touch, nor fond caress.  
Tho' human hearts, their troth avowed,  
May loving hands with ardor press.

Who'll sound the Universe of Soul?  
Reveal the laws of Life and Thought?  
Come, Newton of a loftier goal,  
Unbar those heavens with secrets  
fraught!

—Translated for Science Service by  
Flora Preston Hogbin.

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