

## First Glances at New Books

**FIRST CROSSING OF THE POLAR SEA**—Roald Amundsen and Lincoln Ellsworth—*Doran* (\$5). In addition to the main narrative of the principals in this outstanding triumph of adventure-plus-science, their associates also contribute chapters on their several parts. The book is a fascinating narrative as well as a valuable record, and its value is increased by the excellence of its illustrations and general makeup.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927

**BIRDS OF CENTRAL NEW YORK MARSHES**—Aretas A. Saunders—*Roosevelt Wild Life Bulletin*, v. 3, no. 3. Description of the marsh birds of New York plus an appeal to save them from extinction by preserving Central New York marshes.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927

**STANDARDS YEARBOOK: 1927**—National Bureau of Standards—*Government Printing Office* (\$1). A comprehensive review of a year's progress in making things run better by fitting them together better, with summaries of all kinds of standards and measures.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927

**TO BEGIN WITH**—Raymond Pearl—*Knopf* (\$1.50). The annotations to this reading list for graduate students in science are perhaps as entertaining as the venerable authorities they describe. The distinguished author evidently cherishes the belief that embryo scientists, if sufficiently and discriminatingly exposed, may be led to assimilate a certain amount of general culture.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927

**HEIR OF ALL THE AGES**—N. K. McKechnie—*Bobbs Merrill* (\$2.50). Graphic portrayals of typical sections in the history of man going back to his most primitive beginning.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927

**MEDICAL SCIENCE FOR EVERYDAY USE**—Shields Warren—*Lea & Febiger* (\$2). A compendium of useful knowledge about health problems of interest to everyone clearly and simply written.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927

**SHOULD WE BE VACCINATED?**—Bernhard J. Stern—*Harper & Brothers* (\$1.50). The history of vaccination with a useful summary of the existing legislation on the subject.

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## Floods Foretold

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haps the most exact forecasting that we do," said Dr. Charles F. Marvin, chief of the U. S. Weather Bureau. "The prediction side is far ahead of the prevention measures that can be taken."

The bureau's flood warnings are instantly heeded by the people of the region involved, even though the country at large hears very little about a flood until the water reaches an alarming state. The dykes are strengthened, inhabitants are notified. But along the lower Mississippi many thousands of the people are negro farmers and laborers and their families, people who often stick to their homes and trustingly climb up to the rooftops when the river menaces them, rather than escape when warned.

Many of these river dwellers, even if they have escaped with their lives, have now seen their homes wrecked. They have lost their best chance to plant their cotton or other crops, and unless the weather favors them, they may fail to get a crop in at all.

So long as men try to hold the Mississippi and its contributing streams within narrow bounds, so long men will have to keep close watch on the flood hazard, according to Dr. Marvin. In past ages, the river handled the problem in its own way, and made huge drainage areas. But men have built over 2,000 miles of levees to guide the river within a convenient channel. The levees are supposed to stand the strain of the torrent and they hold up remarkably, but if the water seeps in through a small leak in the wall, the rift may grow and the flood may force its way through, as it did at Dayton in the famous flood of 1913. Even though the walls of the levees are built higher and higher, and though they are pushed back from the river bank, even two miles in some places, the river may in emergencies demand and take more room.

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## ENGINEERING

### Urges Flood Control Tests

A few hundred dollars spent in a laboratory study of floods would prevent millions of dollars loss, John R. Freeman, former president of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, said recently in commenting on the Mississippi floods.

"The Federal Government and the

States have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in trying to solve the Mississippi's problems, but it is still possible for one break in a levee to lay waste 5,000 square miles of as fertile land as the sun shines on, with a loss of \$25,000,000 almost overnight," said Mr. Freeman, who accompanied President Roosevelt on his official inspection of the completed Panama Canal in the capacity of expert adviser. He was also consulting engineer for the Chinese government, and has studied flood and river problems in that country.

"A week's work with a model, in which changes of shape and position can be readily made at a total cost of a few hundred dollars, may tell more than six months' effort and \$10,000 spent on an experimental dike or groyne in the field."

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## GENERAL SCIENCE

### Science Service Meeting

The annual meeting of Science Service, Inc., the institution for the popularization of science, was held April 28 and two new members of the board of trustees were elected. Dr. David White, home secretary of the National Academy of Sciences, was named by that body as one of its three representatives upon the board and Marlen E. Pew, editor of the weekly publication, *Editor and Publisher*, was chosen as a representative of the journalistic profession. Trustees reelected were: Dr. D. T. MacDougal, director of the Desert Laboratory, Tucson, Ariz., representing the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. C. G. Abbot, acting secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, representing the National Research Council; and Thomas L. Sidlo of Cleveland, Ohio, representing the E. W. Scripps Estate; John H. Finley of the New York Times, representing the journalistic profession.

Dr. W. E. Ritter, director emeritus of the Scripps Institution for Oceanography and instrumental in the organization of Science Service, was again chosen president. Dr. Vernon Kellogg, permanent secretary of the National Research Council, was elected vice-president and chairman of the executive committee and Dr. J. McKeen Cattell, editor of *Science*, was elected treasurer. These officers, with Dr. White and Mr. Pew, were chosen to constitute the executive committee.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927