

# Books of the Week

**TO SERVE YOU:** To get books, send us a check or money order to cover retail price. Address Book Dept., SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C. Ask for free publications direct from issuing organizations.

**BIRTHDAYS DON'T COUNT**—*New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging*, 326 p., illus., paper, free upon request direct to publisher, 94 Broadway, Newburgh, New York. Authorities discuss multiple social, psychological and medical problems of the increasing number of old people.

**COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC LIGHTINGS**—Charles Abel—*Greenberg*, 272 p., illus., \$7.50. A beautiful book for either professional or amateur photographer generously illustrated with photographs for which technical data are provided.

**CYBERNETICS: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine**—Norbert Wiener—*Wiley*, 194 p., \$3.00. This work developed from a new trend toward study of problems cutting across the various disciplines of science. Dr. Wiener has selected the problem of manipulation of information and communication whether it be between persons or groups, within the nervous system, or in the world of machines. Of interest to all those having to do with scientific method.

**DICTIONARY OF GENETICS: Including Terms Used in Cytology, Animal Breeding and Evolution**—R. L. Knight—*Chronica Botanica*, 183 p., \$4.50. The author hopes that writers will not continue to coin new terms when one of those listed here would serve the purpose.

**THE DRUGS YOU USE**—Austin Smith—*Revere*, 243 p., \$3.00. Telling the patient in non-technical style about what the doctor pre-

scribes and why.

**THE FERNS OF MAINE**—Edith Bolan Ogden—*University Press*, 128 p., illus., paper, \$1.00. Describing 19 genera divided into 99 entities.

**HEALTH INSTRUCTION YEARBOOK 1948**—Oliver E. Byrd—*Stanford University Press*, 320 p., \$3.50. A condensation of 321 articles on health. Surprisingly, one of the most important sources was the Congressional Record.

**LEARNING AND WORLD PEACE: Eighth Symposium**—Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein and R. M. Maciver, Eds.—*Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion (Harper)*, 694 p., \$6.50. Answers by specialists in diverse fields to the question, "How can scholarship contribute to the relief of international tensions?"

**ONWARD MOTIVES IN RESEARCH**—Edward R. Weidlein—*Mellon Institute of Industrial Research*, 7 p., illus., paper, free on request direct to publisher, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh 13, Pa. The Priestley Medal Address.

**RADAR PRIMER**—J. L. Hornung—*McGraw-Hill*, 218 p., illus., \$2.80. Interesting reading for the layman, but containing all the facts necessary for a text on radar. The author was formerly in charge of the radar school at MIT.

**UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD—FROM 6 TO 12**—Clara Lambert—*Public Affairs Committee*, 32 p., illus., paper, 20 cents. Helpful information and advice for parent and teachers.

Science News Letter, November 20, 1948

were turned into the Jordan through a four-mile tunnel under the mountains. This would also provide hydroelectric power for use in Lebanon.

South of Beersheba, he continued, there is a strip of country suitable for dry farming. By careful use of dust-mulching methods, it can be made to yield a crop of barley every other year. Beyond this dry-farming area, grazing can be continued.

Another possibility, he suggested, would be the cultivation of natural desert plants from which a profit can be made, like guayule for rubber.

The Negeb has seen more prosperous days, Dr. Lowdermilk stated. It was a well-cultivated country when it was part of the Byzantine Empire. When he was there on an earlier trip, he flew over much of it in a plane, and could see the lines of old irrigation canals and the sites of old dams, that kept the land watered in the fifth and sixth centuries A. D. He could even see where accumulated silt had been cleared out from above the dams, and piled on shore.

Then the power of Byzantium began to crumble before the onset of the new power of Islam. Mohammed's followers, like the Prophet himself, were herdsmen, not farmers. They let the irrigation system go to ruin, and they devoured the land with the unsparing teeth of their sheep, goats and camels. So the Negeb sank to its present low state, where it will stay until modern engineering brings it the waters of salvation.

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## AGRICULTURE

# Negeb Has Good Soil

► THE NEGEB, disputed arid southern end of Palestine, could support five times its present population of 50,000 if properly irrigated and scientifically farmed. So declared Dr. W. C. Lowdermilk, formerly of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service, who has just returned from a long stay abroad, during which he spent several months studying conditions in the Mediterranean region.

A considerable part of the soil in the Negeb, he stated, is of the fine-grained type known as loess, similar to the fabulously productive corn-land of western Iowa. Only it doesn't get enough water on it. Annual rainfall at Beersheba, traditionally the southernmost town in ancient Israel, is only eight inches. A little to the northwest, at Gaza, where Samson met Delilah and other troubles, it is 14 inches.

Here and there, unhappy Arabs carry on "patch farming" on favorable spots, but for the most part the nomad population makes a living (such as it is) by pasturing sheep and goats. Goats are the damnation of a land, in Dr. Lowdermilk's opinion. They begin where the sheep leave off and where

they leave off no other animal can find a mouthful. Then drought claims the country, plus fierce erosion when the occasional cloudbursts come.

By diverting water from the Jordan river into irrigation canals, Dr. Lowdermilk said, 80,000 acres of this stripped and barren land could be made fruitful again. To this another 100,000 acres could be added if water from the Litani river in Lebanon

## THE BINARY SLIDE RULE



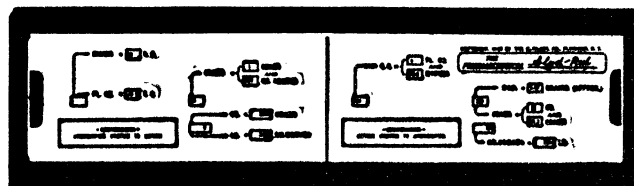
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