

First Glances at New Books

PRINCIPLES OF SOIL MICROBIOLOGY—Selman A. Waksman—*Williams and Wilkins* (\$10). The rôle of microscopic living things in the soil has long been recognized as highly important and has evoked a huge literature, which in the nature of things has become very much scattered, so that it has been insuperably difficult for the student to be sure he has covered even a particular subdivision of the field. Professor Waksman has therefore performed a service for which all generations of men who have to do either with the soil or with the legion forms of microbiota will rise up and call him blessed. The publisher's boast, "The most exhaustive study in any language," is not an idle one. Nothing is neglected—bacteria, myxomycetes, protozoa, algae, fungi, worms, all the teeming life most of us never even think about, are examined from the points of view of systematics, physiology, ecology, chemistry, physics. There are relatively few illustrations, but these are wholly to the point; of more importance are the tabulated quantitative data and the abundant and meticulous literature references. Hereafter the soils student will reach for his Waksman as automatically as the preacher preparing for his sermon reaches for his Biblical concordance.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

GENERAL BIOLOGY: LIFE AND EVOLUTION—S. J. Holmes—*Harcourt Brace*. Most text-books in this field content themselves with a chapter or two on the subject of evolution—and during the past couple of years even this has sometimes been done with a somewhat apologetic flavor. Professor Holmes boldly seizes the bull by the horns, writes every section in his book from the evolutionary point of view, and turns out a text that every teacher of beginning biology classes (except, of course, in Mississippi, Texas and Tennessee) should find it a delight to use.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

THE NEW MEDICAL FOLLIES—Morris Fishbein—*Boni and Liveright* (\$2). More truths for all the world to read on cults and quackeries in general and on such live subjects as weight reduction, psychoanalysis, beauty shops and rejuvenation in particular.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ASTRONOMY—S. A. Mitchell and C. G. Abbot—*Van Nostrand* (\$3). The last two years have brought a veritable flood of books on astronomy, some elementary and some more advanced, but in some ways this book is the best of its class. Intended as an introductory text, it is the only one that approaches the subject from the astrophysical, rather than the geometrical, aspect. As both authors are authorities in the physical side of astronomy, the first as professor of astronomy at the University of Virginia and a leading expert on solar eclipses, and the second as director of the Astrophysical Observatory of the Smithsonian Institution, they have produced a book which is thoroughly accurate and scientific. Yet, as the book is based on Dr. Abbot's popular "Earth and the Stars," it is readable enough to be interesting to the layman who wants to learn more about the other inhabitants of the universe.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

THE FERNS—F. O. Bower—*Cambridge Press*. The first volume, issued in 1923, was an exhaustive and analytical survey of the criteria of comparison within this botanical group; the second, now out, takes up the Eusporangiateae and other relatively primitive forms. Future volumes are to deal with the remaining sections. This is a work designed for the specialist, but indispensable to him. Wherever the study of ferns is taken seriously, wherever graduates and advanced undergraduates are at work in morphology, space will have to be found on the shelves for Bower.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

BACKYARD EXPLORATION—Paul G. Howes—*Doubleday Page* (\$6). Not strictly backyard, for the author confesses a ten-mile radius. But a large proportion of the creatures he has studied can really be found in the average suburban back yard, and Mr. Howes has certainly demonstrated what can be done by patience and a close observation of common things. The book is freely illustrated with original photographs, all of them good, some of them astonishingly so.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

FITTING DRESSES AND BLOUSES—Farmers' Bulletin No. 1530—*Government Printing Office* (10c.) A useful addition to the household library, not only for farmers' wives but for every woman and girl who attempts to make her own clothes.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

PHOTOGRAPHY, ITS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE—C. B. Neblette—*Van Nostrand* (\$6.50). Here is a book that fills a long-felt need. Despite the importance of photography to modern science, there has been a surprising lack (in English) of detailed treatises on the subject. There have been plenty of books for the amateur snaphooter and on special and more advanced topics. Professor Neblette, however, has produced a work that will be of value to the scientist who wishes to apply photographic methods in his own work to best advantage, and to the photographer who wants to know the "why" of his processes.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPE—Preston William Slosson—*Houghton Mifflin* (\$4). A comprehensive narrative of events during the most dramatic quarter-century of the world's history, covering not only Europe but also including Asia and Africa under European influence. A volume of over 700 pages, equally adapted for the use of history classes and of individual readers who want to survey the background of the day's news. A chapter on the progress of science and invention has been contributed to the book by the Director of Science Service.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

THE ESSENTIAL OILS—Horace Finemore—*Van Nostrand*. (\$20). A complete encyclopedia of everything known to date about this very important pharmaceutical group, crowded between the covers of one thick volume. The descriptions are arranged according to the botanical classification of the plant sources, and each article is followed by appropriate references to the literature. It would seem as though this volume must become a "Bible" in its particular field.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

PHYSICS IN ITS RELATIONS—*Vassar College*. A symposium by such eminent scientists as Michael I. Pupin, R. A. Millikan, Henry Norris Russell, T. H. Morgan, W. R. Whitney and Frederick A. Saunders, on the significance of physics in other fields of learning.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHT SOURCES, THE DYNAMO AND THE STEAM ENGINE—*University of Pittsburgh* (\$.75). Nine radio talks given by University of Pittsburgh professors from station KDKA.

Science News-Letter, June 4, 1927