

GLANCES AT NEW BOOKS

ANIMAL LIFE OF THE CARLSBAD CAVERN—Vernon Bailey—*Williams and Wilkins* (\$3). This scientific guide describes the animal life near a recently explored addition to our national wonders, as well as the creatures that dwell in its sunless depths. Everyone who journeys into the Southwest should see Carlsbad Cavern, and should study this book as a preface to his visit.

Zoology

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

SCIENCE OF ANIMAL LIFE—William Morton Barrows—*World Book Co.* (\$1.75). A textbook of elementary zoology, well illustrated and for the most part clearly written. Evolution is not so much as mentioned by name, but appears as an hypothesis under the alias "adaptive radiation."

Zoology

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

THREE YOUNG CROWS AND OTHER BIRD STORIES—Ernest Harold Baynes—*Macmillan* (\$1.75). A series of anecdotes of experiences with birds.

Zoology

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

SUICIDE—Ruth Shonle Cavan—*Chicago Press* (\$3). The author has dredged up an enormous amount of statistical and psychological information about suicides for the rest of the world to see and heed.

Sociology—Psychology

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

YEAR BOOK, 1926-1927—*Carnegie Institution of Washington*. This report covers a year's progress by the departments of a leading American scientific institution which in a vast multitude of researches expends over a million and a half.

General Science

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

MIRRORS OF THE YEAR—Edited by Horace Winston Stokes—*Stokes* (\$4). Since the chapter on science in this "revue of outstanding figures, trends and events of 1927-8" is by Science Service, we may be considered prejudiced in what we say about it. There is nothing of the dry fact and figures of ordinary yearbooks in this collection of articles by such authorities as Bryd, Wharton, Phelps, Bromfield, Sherwood, Erskine, Seibold and others. To read it is to understand better just what happened last year.

History

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

In some towns in the United States 90 per cent. of the street trees are maples.

Wood Cellulose Rivals Cotton

Chemistry—Agriculture

King Cotton must abdicate in what was once considered to be the very heart of his realm, the southeastern states. From central Mississippi eastward, it costs so much to grow cotton that the high-priced product can not compete with the low-priced cellulose now being manufactured from wood and soon to be made from cornstalks. This thesis is boldly laid down by Dr. William J. Hale, director of organic chemical research of the Dow Chemical Company.

"The old practice of raising cotton in this section seems destined to obsolescence," said Dr. Hale. "The cost of growing cotton in this section is approximately ten cents per pound and yet you must face the inroads of alpha cellulose from woody fiber offered on the market at eight cents. Millions of pounds of cotton will be displaced from industrial use this year in the manufacture of rayon and nitrating paper. Even cotton linters at four cents per pound can not compete long,

but possibly at two cents may still find considerable use. In other words, cotton must be driven to ten or twelve cents per pound if it is to hold its position in the textile world."

Cotton will still hold its own west of the Mississippi, where it can be produced at five or six cents per pound, Dr. Hale believes. In the Southeast, its cultivation can be continued at a profit for some years to come on the larger plantations, but the smaller farmer will do well to look at once for other crops. Dr. Hale recommended especially peanuts, which can be pressed for a high-grade food oil. Their shells also have good potentialities as industrial material. Sugar cane, where it can be grown, and sorghum to the north of the sugar cane belt, were other suggestions. Besides their yield of sugar and molasses, these plants are coming into an immense demand as sources of fiber for artificial lumber.

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

Reindeer Eat Eskimo Lampwicks

Zoology

Reindeer lichen, or "moss" as it is more frequently called, furnishes the best winter fodder for the vast reindeer herds of Alaska for the same reason that is used to be the Eskimos' best wicks for their primitive stone blubber lamps. Dry as the proverbial shavings during the summer, the lichen soaks up snow water like a wick, and thereby becomes soft and succulent and fit for the adequate chewing apparatus of the reindeer. Supplementary winter browse is also provided by great beds of sedge that grow in the wet tundras.

The so-called "barren ground" of interior Alaska is not as bad as its name might seem to indicate, states William B. Miller of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, but furnishes lichens, brush and other fodder to vast herds of animals. East-

ern Alaska is held by the native caribou, fine animals and larger than the reindeer, but wild and not adapted to herding. Western interior Alaska, together with the coastal regions and the islands, have been taken over by the reindeer.

Reindeer were introduced from Europe in the early nineties. In 1892 there were only 1280 animals in Alaska; the latest estimates place their present numbers at about half a million. The main problem now is to devise an efficient and economical system of getting their meat to market.

On some of the islands experiments are being made in hybridizing reindeer with their larger cousins the caribou, but it is too early as yet to expect any definite results.

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928

Smoke Injures Crops

Metallurgy—Agriculture

The Ruhr industrial region, recently restored to normal operation following the withdrawal of the French, has given a striking illustration of the damage wrought by factory smoke not only to trees and gardens in the cities but to the farm crops throughout the countryside. When the French occupied the region

in 1923 the Germans adopted a policy of "passive resistance," closing down all the factories. With the air cleared of its load of smoke and acid fumes, the farms of the Ruhr valley yielded full crops for the first time in many years. Then the French withdrew and the chimneys started smoking again, and now the crops have dropped back to their previous low level.

Science News-Letter, February 25, 1928