



"A Table Before Me"

► FINDING FOOD enough in the jungle should become less of a problem for our fighters in the Pacific theater of war: introductions to a large variety of edible plants have now been arranged by one of the world's leading botanists, Dr. E. D. Merrill of Harvard University, through a new technical manual of the War Department, entitled *Emergency and Poisonous Plants of the Islands of the Pacific* (Supt. of Publ. Documents, 15c).

The handbook is small (pocket-size, and only 149 pages) but it is complete, thorough and practical; written moreover with an eye to its use by men who may never have paid any attention to plants before an urgent stomach tells them to hurry up now and learn some botany. A large proportion of the species described are also pictured; there are 113 simple but adequate pen-and-ink drawings. Names are given first in English, then the botanist's Latin for positive identification, then native names in anywhere up to 20 or 30 local dialects, just in case you have a chance to ask a brown neighbor any questions.

Divisions are along strictly practical lines: plants with edible leaves and stems, with fleshy tubers or roots, with good fruits, with edible seeds. Some are not native to the jungle, but may be found where gardens once have been, or "gone native." The latter group include such familiar American species as peanuts, lima beans and small wild tomatoes. Familiar, too, through its close resemblance to our American species is the oriental lotus: we may have actual lotus-eaters among us presently.

There is a short special section of plants used to stupefy fish, which includes the derris which has become a

standard source of insect sprays. Another brief section is devoted to ferns, all of which are given a clean bill of health so far as danger from poison is concerned. The tree ferns can yield tasty and nutritious "cabbages"—their terminal buds. Similar "cabbages" can be obtained from many kinds of palms.

The rather numerous tribe of the aroids, identifiable by their "elephant-ear" leaves, some of them very large, include the taros, staple food source for thousands of dark islanders, but reputed to be poisonous to the uninitiated. They are not really poisonous, Dr. Merrill states, but they do contain myriads of sharp-pointed microscopic crystals, which can cause extreme irritation to the lining of the digestive tract. These can be eliminated by thorough cooking, after which the plants become one of the best sources of emergency food.

Unnecessary fears are often entertained about the "poisonous" character of the tropics. Dr. Merrill lists only half-a-dozen plant species as poisonous, among them the familiar castor-bean. He states also that the chances of getting bitten by a venomous serpent in the tropical jungle is rather less than that of being struck by a rattlesnake right here at home

in the United States. Insects and other creeping things are really more troublesome—and more dangerous.

Dr. Merrill is in position to speak as one having authority. He was in active botanical work in the Philippines for more than 20 years, with a number of expeditions into other tropical lands. At present, besides being professor of botany at Harvard, he is supervisor of the university's great collection of living trees, the Arnold Arboretum.

Science News Letter, July 10, 1943

A pipeline from Sundown, Texas, to Drumright, Okla., recently authorized, will be 16 inches in diameter and have a capacity of 54,000 barrels of crude oil daily.

Nearly 194,000,000 ounces of silver were used in the United States in 1942, an increase of 43% over the amount used in 1941; one-half is used directly or indirectly for war purposes.

Tungsten is being mined in large quantities in the California Sierras 11,400 feet above sea level; molybdenum, copper, silver and a small amount of gold are obtained from the same mines.

PSYCHOLOGY

FOR THE FIGHTING MAN

This new Infantry Journal book tells in an easily understood fashion—

- how to look through camouflage—how to see in the dark
- how to hear through battle noise—how to read rapidly
- how to camouflage sounds—how not to get airsick or seasick
- how to take care of tired eyes—how to push down enemy morale
- how to manage the effects of rumors—how to read rapidly
- how to get into the right military job—how to fight fear
- and many more HOWS of psychological importance to men in service and to every civilian as well.

This book is a very definite MUST for everyone. Its more than normal page content (in the handy Fighting Forces-Penguin edition) was prepared by a Committee of the National Research Council with the collaboration of Science Service and 59 authors and collaborators, all recognized as outstanding specialists in their given fields.

The paper covered edition is 25c.

Cloth bound, the book is \$1.50. Prepaid.

Order through the Book Department of

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

1719 N Street, N. W., Washington 6, D. C.