

### A Worsening World

➤ **ATOMIC WAR** is not the most serious threat to the continued existence of the human race today; man is threatened with self-destruction through reckless misuse of the land that destroys his very means of subsistence, declares Dr. Fairfield Osborn, president of the New York Zoological Society. In a new book, *Our Plundered Planet*, published by Little, Brown and Company (\$2.50), he traces the consequences of man's need and greed through the centuries, and points out the fate that will be inevitable if our present land-ruining practices are permitted to persist.

Despite the pressure of hungry millions on food resources, greed seems to have played a larger part than need in wasting the soil. Deforesting upper mountain slopes, plowing good pasture into bad fields, overloading the range with too many sheep (and worse still, goats) is a story that has been repeated over and over through the ages. That is why ruined temples stand today in Syria on stony hills that were once soil-covered. That is why sand clogs Roman cities in North Africa. That is why mod-

ern Spain is a land of agricultural slums, breeding revolt. That is why "Okies and Arkies" streamed out towards California half a generation ago—and may do so again.

The slogan, "America can feed the world," is a delusion, Dr. Osborn declares; America may soon be having difficulties feeding herself. Even newer lands, like Australia and New Zealand, are already suffering almost as badly as we from the consequences of forest destruction, boom wheat planting, and insane overgrazing.

Nor is much help to be expected from the "undeveloped" humid tropics, he continues, relentlessly. Nobody wants to

live in them anyway, and in any case most tropical soils are no good for really productive farming if they are cleared—and are not then promptly washed away by torrential rains. We shall have to seek our own salvation at home.

"The question remains," Dr. Osborn concludes. "Are we to continue on the same dusty perilous road once traveled to its dead end by other mighty and splendid nations, or, in our wisdom, are we going to choose the only route that does not lead to the disaster that has already befallen so many other peoples of the earth?"

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### OPHTHALMOLOGY

## Less Light for Eye Work

➤ **YOU** don't need nearly as much light for close visual work as the standards recommended by the code of the Illuminating Engineering Society. This is the conclusion of Drs. Ernst Simonson and Josef Brozek, of the Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene, University of Minnesota.

They question the present standards as a result of tests on six young men in good health who each put in two hours of difficult eye work. It was so severe as to be equivalent, the investigators believe, to about six to eight hours in industry. The task was designed to duplicate essentially the recognition of fine details necessary on a conveyor inspection job.

In addition to measuring the work turned out during the two hours, tests were made before and after the work to reveal the extent of fatigue. The experiments were conducted repeatedly at six illumination levels of 2, 5, 15, 50, 100, and 300 footcandles.

The best illumination for this kind of

work was found to be 100 footcandles. This is at or below the minimum recommended by the I. E. S. The scientists on whose work the I. E. S. standards are based recommend as much as 500 to 3,000 footcandles for discriminating fine details.

Increasing the illumination above the optimum of 100 footcandles only resulted in more fatigue and poorer performance, it was found, even when glare was excluded.

A light of 100 footcandles is about that of a 500-watt lamp at a distance of three feet or less. A 300 footcandle illumination would call for a 1,500-watt lamp at the same distance.

The Minnesota scientists have reported their findings in the *Journal of the Optical Society of America* (April).

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### ORNITHOLOGY

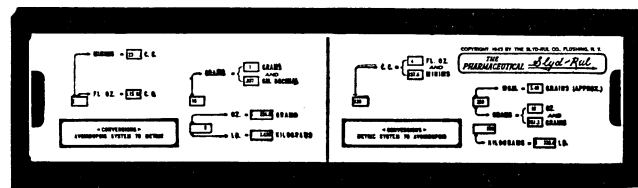
## Barn Swallows' Nests Made From Pellets of Mud

See Front Cover

➤ **YOUNG** barn swallows are reared in nests constructed from pellets of mud mixed with pieces of straw and grass, as shown on the cover of this week's *SCIENCE NEWS LETTER*. The nests are generally stuccoed against a barn rafter or joist, and carefully lined with soft feathers. Sometimes as many as a dozen pairs of barn swallows will have nests near each other. As the parent birds flutter around their nests or circle low about the fields their twittering song fills the air with a feeling of good cheer.

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