

The Middle East

A Physical, Social and Regional Geography. By Dr. W. B. Fisher. Pp. xiii+514. (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1950.) 27s. 6d. net.

THE first problem with which Dr. W. B. Fisher had to contend was the definition of the Middle East, a term that is used in widely varying senses. He regards as a unit the area east from Cyrenaica, Crete and Egypt to Arabia and Iran and north to Turkey. No other part of Africa is included. His use of the term leaves no room for the cognate one of Near East, which is generally applied to the eastern end of the Mediterranean. But, after all, this is only a matter of nomenclature and does not affect the value of the book. The physical background outlined by Dr. Fisher is relatively slight but adequate, and his treatment of the climate and vegetation is specially good. But interest on the whole is concentrated on the social, economic and historical aspects. The book is readable and none too long for the vast scope of its subject. In places it is unduly brief, for example, on the Suez Canal in both its physical and political aspects and perhaps also on Egypt. There are many sketch maps, some a little crude, and adequate bibliographies. R. N. R. B.

Land Utilization in Australia

By Prof. C. M. Wadham and Prof. G. L. Wood. Second edition, revised. Pp. xx+376+77 plates. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; London: Cambridge University Press, 1950.) 30s. net.

THIS post-war revision of a valuable study will be read with interest by those concerned with the land resources of the world and their utilization. The special interest of this edition is twofold. There is a consideration of the impact of war-time production and trade in the Australian Continent and the influence of such factors as the closing of markets, new needs, such as the British demand for flax, and even the American soldier's non-acceptance of mutton. Then there is the assessment of the question of post-war development and the discussion of settlement possibilities, always a matter of interest so far as Australia is concerned. Here the exposition of the deterrents to any close settlement of even the more favoured regions is of particular note and should be studied by those who tend to take a facile view of migration as a cure for world population problems. The authors can scarcely be blamed for the present-day difficulties, which impose a time-lag on publication and which thus make some of the statistics seem a bit out of date and prevent any consideration of the influence of recent changes in the price of wool.

Bibliography of Electron Microscopy

Edited by Dr. V. E. Cosslett for the Institute of Physics. Pp. 350. (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1950.) 40s. net.

THE electron microscope as a research tool is now about ten years old. During that period there has grown up an abundant literature, dealing with basic electron optical theory, with the production and interpretation of electron micrograms, with techniques for preparing specimens to meet the exacting requirements of the instrument and, latterly in particular, with its applications in many different branches of science and technology. Dr. V. E. Cosslett and his team have done an excellent job in preparing this comprehensive bibliography, which

covers some 2,500 papers published up to the end of 1948. The field covered appears by test to be well-nigh complete, and abstracts are given of the majority of the papers included.

It is a pity, however, that the material has been arranged only in alphabetical sequence of authors. One would have thought that it would not have involved undue additional labour to have added a subject guide, or preferably to have arranged the items primarily by subject, with an alphabetical author index—a task which would have been greatly helped by numbering all the items in a single sequence. The very breadth of the subject-matter makes the lack of some such arrangement all the more regrettable, and it is to be hoped that any future volume will be improved in this respect. L. V. CHILTON

Organic Syntheses

An Annual Publication of Satisfactory Methods for the Preparation of Organic Chemicals. Vol. 30, 1950. Arthur C. Cope, Editor-in-Chief. Pp. vi+115. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.; London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1950.) 20s. net.

THE thirty-nine preparations described in this volume offer, as usual in this admirable series, a wide variety of substances and methods. The formation of *trans*-2-chlorocyclopentanol from cyclopentene is an interesting example of the use of monochlorourea, prepared from urea, as a source of hypochlorous acid. An attractive synthesis of ethanedithiol proceeds from thiourea and ethylene dibromide via ethylene diisothiuronium bromide. Dihydropyran, obtainable by dehydrating tetrahydrofurfuryl alcohol, furnishes glutaric acid in excellent yield through hydrolysis and oxidation with nitric acid. The preparation of *cis*- Δ^4 -tetrahydrophthalic anhydride by the addition of butadiene to maleic anhydride is described with a useful diagram of the apparatus furnishing a yield of 93–97 per cent. Among other preparations are fumaronitrile, methanesulphonyl chloride, 1-naphthaldehyde, phenylacetylene, *o*-tolualdehyde, vanillic acid and the vinyl esters of a series of the higher fatty acids.

JOHN READ

Tropical Fishes as Pets

By Christopher W. Coates. Reprint. Pp. xi+226+29 plates. (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1951.) 12s. 6d. net.

THIS book has a much wider market than when it was first published seventeen years ago. For in that interval the number of people who keep tropical fish for pleasure or profit has increased enormously. Mr. C. W. Coates, who is a specialist in tropical fish at the New York Aquarium, gives good descriptions of most of the exotic fishes likely to be available to British aquarists.

After stressing that nobody should attempt to keep fish unless possessed of something called 'fish sense', he also provides four informative chapters on fish management. It is an unfortunate fact that the length of the technical names of these fishes seems to be inversely proportional to their body-length. Also Mr. Coates does not help matters for the lay reader by using the full scientific names; thus *Platypleurodon maculatus* is surely long enough for a one-inch fish without making it *Platypleurodon maculatus* Guenther.

The fifty-seven photographs are a mixed lot. A few are good, but too many are so dark that the fishes can barely be distinguished.