

view of the well-arranged index. Passing from beliefs on weather signs, the author goes on to discuss matters connected with crops, domestic management and water finders. These water witches or 'witch wigglers' are clearly ordinary water diviners or dowzers, although Mr. Randolph gives no indication that he is aware of these widespread beliefs. Moreover, it is a little difficult to understand why, when seeing one of these dowzers at work, the author should have "shivered" and felt as if the hair was rising on the back of his neck, a fact which he himself explains by maintaining that there was something "uncanny and obscene" about the divining rod.

Much of the folk-medicine and folk-beliefs concerning pregnancy and childbirth could be paralleled elsewhere, and it would be an interesting study to see how far these could be traced to early British sources. Although from what Mr. Randolph has said it would seem that Ozark superstitions are commonly held and of great variety, it would be a mistake to suppose that similar collections could not be made for other regions in which the population has not been cut off to the same extent as those living in Ozarkland. It is true that the superstitions of these less isolated communities would differ radically from those held in the Ozark highlands, but anyone who receives the lavishly produced catalogues of talismans, amulets and charms which circulate in the United States and who reads the advertisements in the newspapers of California and the Middle-West, will conclude that a study of these superstitions would be as entertaining and informative as those of the Ozark country here so assiduously collected by Mr. Randolph.

E. J. DINGWALL

RECLAMATION OF THE LAND

Land Reclamation

By P. J. O. Trist. Pp. 178 + 15 plates. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1948.) 15s. net.

THIS book gives an excellent account of problems facing the officers of the war agricultural executive committees in their task of increasing food production during the War. It was essential national policy that as much food as possible should be grown at home, and that so far as possible every acre of potentially good land should be cultivated. But several decades of agricultural depression had left their mark in thousands of acres of land being abandoned or being so badly farmed that in 1939 they made no worthwhile contribution to the national larder. Much of this land was potentially fertile; it was merely costly and difficult to keep in good heart and in many areas it had broken most of the farmers who were trying to get a living off it.

Mr. Trist confines himself to the problems facing the Essex Committee, of which he was first a district officer and then the cultivations officer, in deciding which under-farmed or derelict areas should be reclaimed, and the method of reclamation to be used. The soils involved were mainly heavy clays, either in derelict pasture or thorn scrub, and the work involved included clearing hedges, cleaning out ditches, seeing to the drainage system, and discovering the best methods of doing the critical cultivations before a crop was sown on most of the land. On some, however, the far more difficult problems of bush and scrub clearing had to be undertaken. All the multitude of problems arising from lack of

experience, shortage of the proper tools and of suitable foremen for the large unskilled and often unwilling labour force that had to be drafted on to the land are dealt with clearly and at sufficient length for the intelligent general reader to appreciate the difficulties that had to be overcome in successfully carrying out these reclamations.

The book has also a great historical value, for it gives a very good account of the workings of many war organisations, such as the set-up of the county war committees, the difficulties of employing and limitations in using the various types of labour that had to be drafted on to the land, and many other of the day-to-day problems that arise when a great effort is needed to increase food production. Let us hope that the agricultural policy of Great Britain will continue to encourage the farming community to keep all their land at a high level of productivity, so that the lessons learnt during the War will not have to be slowly re-learned if a future emergency arises.

E. W. RUSSELL

EGG-LAYING BATTERY MANAGEMENT

Eggs from Every Cage

Describing Laying Battery Management. By H. E. Swepstone. Pp. 83. (Worcester: Littlebury and Co., Ltd., n.d.) 7s. 6d. net.

MR. SWEPSTONE has written a book on laying batteries which should be of great value to the large number of beginners who are interested in this latest system of commercial egg production. The battery system is equally suitable for the domestic poultry-keeper with half-a-dozen birds, the commercial poultry-keeper and the general farmer, so that this useful little book should have a very wide reading public. The author has had twenty years experience of poultry-keeping, and after trying several methods he states that the best of all is the single hen laying battery. In fact, he would rather give up than attempt commercial egg production on any other lines. Surely this is ample testimony of the efficiency of this system.

This book is written by a practical man who has made a success of the battery system, and it provides all the information that the beginner is likely to require. There are excellent chapters and diagrams on the construction of houses and cages, the best way to start and the right management to get satisfactory results. The arguments in favour of starting with day-old pullets, or partly grown birds, are fully explored, and the man wishing to rear his own replacement stock will find the chapter on intensive rearing very helpful.

The method of accounting is well explained; but the figures of costs and returns would be very much more helpful to the beginner if they could have been converted to present-day values rather than pre-war. In his foreword, Mr. Swepstone asks the reader to substitute current prices for those given, and although this may present no difficulty to the experienced poultry-keeper familiar with the trend of prices, it is not so easy for the beginner, to whom the book will have the greatest appeal. Nevertheless, this handy little volume is well written in practical language and should be on the bookshelf of every poultry-keeper.

T. E. WHITTLE