

# NEW BOOKS

## Man's Foods—Nutrition and Environments in Food Gathering Times and Food Producing Time

LLOYD B. JENSEN, 278 pages, the Garrard Press, Champaign, Ill. 1953. \$4.50. Reviewed by FRANCIS JOSEPH WEISS, consultant on food and nutrition, Washington, D. C.

THE ENORMOUS expansion of our factual knowledge in this scientific age together with the natural limitations of our intellectual apparatus have led to ever greater specialization and finally to a breakdown of the totality of our knowledge into social and natural sciences which subsequently split in ever more fields of research. However, anthropology occupies a central position combining physical and cultural aspects of man's origin and development—and so does food, being both a physical substance and the most powerful driving force in human history, and social and cultural life. While humans have spent 99% of the half a million to one million years they have been waddling on earth as food gatherers, it is only since the Neolithic revolution or, according to radiocarbon dating, about 7000 years ago, that they became food producers.

It is fascinating to follow in Jensen's book the intricate relation between agricultural and food preparation on the one hand and major cultural developments on the other hand. He most convincingly demonstrates that civilization cannot exist where man must spend his time like an animal in gathering acorns, digging roots, collecting small animals such as snails, grubs, or insects or hunting larger ones; however, food production must be effective to offer man the natural basis for his achievements.

Prehistoric finds show that, wherever agriculture appears, there is also a site of an early civilization. Better nutrition cannot be discounted as a major factor in the sudden efflorescence of cultures as much as faulty or insufficient nutrition may have contributed to the decline and fall of empires. From 1834, when the universal nutrient was found to consist of three components (carbohydrate, protein, and fat) until 1949, when the discovery of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> increased the number of essential nutrients to 50, agronomists and nutritionists were concerned with the study of the chemical composition of various foods, their growing, processing, digestion, physiological response, chemical reaction, and thus

lost sight of the social realities involved in food and nutrition that are so deeply rooted in history, folklore, and religion.

For this reason, reading Jensen's history of food serves as a timely and refreshing reminder to natural scientists not to overlook the tremendous social and cultural implications of their work, but it should also be required reading for historians and political scientists who until lately were not wont to deal with man's most universal need with the profundity and understanding that recent advances in agricultural and nutritional science require.

The last chapter "Nutrition and Man's Welfare" does not bring anything new to the natural scientists, but offers the social scientist in a few very condensed pages and up-to-date tables the essence of the newer knowledge of nutrition. The very comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book is a most welcome addition for all interested in man and his foods.

This book could have been written only by a man who is not only a master in many fields of science, but also understands to integrate his knowledge onto one all-encompassing unit. The book contains a wealth of new and not easily accessible information and should be highly recommended to all workers in the field of food and nutrition.

## Chemical Control of Insects

T. F. WEST, J. ELIOT HARDY, and J. H. FORD. 211 pages. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, N. Y., 1952. \$3.25. Reviewed by C. J. KRISTER, Du Pont Co.

COURAGE IS essential for those tackling the formidable task of outlining the present status of modern developments in the control of insects with chemicals. Such courage is demonstrated by the three authors of this volume, but it is doubtful that they have successfully completed their mission.

A rapid reading enables this reviewer to record the following reactions:

1. The status of the field up to 1948 is apparently well covered, but the developments of the last four years are not described in this book which carries a 1952 dateline.

2. Considerable space is devoted to compounds which no longer play a major role in modern chemical insect control. Eleven pages are given to nicotine and only one and a half for parathion.

"Lethane" and "Thanite" also hardly warrant the five precious pages used.

3. The important role of toxaphenes DDT, aldrin, and other newer synthetic, for control of cotton insects is not even hinted at.

4. Important recent miticide developments are missing.

5. The three nontechnical developments which have played a significant part in influencing developments in this field are neglected:

The Food and Drug Administration Tolerance Hearings (FDC-57); Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act of 1947; and the Delaney Congressional Committee Hearings of 1950-52.

6. Minor errors noticed include: an unpardonable error occurred on the frontispiece in omission of the "s" from Colorado Springs; page 43, bond incorrectly placed in methallyl chloride; page 200, typographical error, listing incorrectly initials of P. N. Annand.

This brief volume may be of some value to those not intimately connected with this rapidly developing field, and especially to those outside the United States. It is of decidedly lesser interest and use to the expert, to research workers impatiently pressing the frontiers, and those looking for summarized information more recent than 1948.

## Vitamins, A Digest of Current Knowledge

L. J. HARRIS. vii + 244 pages. John de Graff, Inc., 64 West 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y. 1952. \$3.75

THIS is a well written review of most of the major advances up to 1950. The clinical and nutritional aspects are more detailed than the biochemistry of the vitamins; thus a considerable amount of data in the review will be of value in stimulating memories of clinicians and dieticians.

Space devoted to some of the B vitamins (two pages to pantothenic acid and three pages to vitamin B<sub>6</sub>) is small compared to that on some of the others (87 pages for vitamins A, C, and D) and results largely from the little knowledge concerning the nutritional and clinical phases of certain B vitamins.

The historical approach, which the author believes to be the most valuable, makes the book particularly useful to beginning science students interested in vitamins.