

## Belles lettres and bell ringers

*Earth History* by Luther C. Snider,  
Century Company, New York. 1932.

IT is very trite to say that this or that book reads like a novel; but that is exactly what I should like to say about Doctor Snider's *Earth History* which is just off the press.

A few years ago I had occasion to write a review of a book on geology, written by a gentleman who was a newspaper writer and a socialist politician, but who had only a superficial knowledge of geology. The book was written in the most approved newspaper style, and from the standpoint of diction and phraseology, was quite readable. But no geologist reading it would think for a moment that the writer had any first hand knowledge of the subject. In reviewing the book, I said in substance, that while it was probably a better book on geology written by a socialist than would be a book on socialism written by a geologist, at the same time, it was very obvious that the shoemaker should stick to his last.

Such a criticism can never be made on Snider's book. It is a book about geology written in an attractive style by a man who is himself an eminent geologist.

The treatment is different from anything so far published in America with which I am acquainted. It is not de-

Now there are scientists who run to "big words." I know men who will never use one short word if they can by signed as a text book to be placed in the hands of sophomores, although it is conceivable that even a sophomore might with profit use it as a text. Neither is it a manual to be thumbed by the specialist, although the material is authoritative and up to date, and the specialist may find therein much of value. As the title indicates, it is primarily a story of the earth. But it is an arm-chair, cozy-evening sort of book, that the layman can readily understand and that the specialist will appreciate.

In a sense, Dr. Snider has achieved the very difficult not to say impossible, task, of making popular a scientific subject. Every science, every trade, every profession has its own vocabulary. Certain technical expressions are not to be avoided. One cannot write long about electricity without using such terms as volts and watts, nor about automobiles without speaking of spark plugs and



Dr. Luther C. Snider, in 1908 chemist for the Oklahoma Geological Survey, 1910-15 assistant director of the survey, author of "Earth History" which is reviewed in this department by Doctor Charles N. Gould

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In the days before the Faculty club house was built, faculty members and their friends conducted social activities in the form of gay picnics. The white lunchcloth spread on the ground was not to be scorned by the jolly group above. The wicker lunch baskets must have been filled to overflowing, and many people who were connected with the campus then, still are, and can remember with pleasure this picnic held about 1912. This picture is among the memoirs of Mrs. Eva E. Dungan, professor of piano, who was among those present.

gear shifts. So with geology. Certain phraseology must be used in order to make the subject understandable.

any chance find two long words to express the same meaning. Snider is not one of these individuals. He never dodges an unfamiliar or technical term, but on the other hand, he never goes out of his way to use one. And when it becomes necessary to use a distinctly geological term, as for instance, fauna, anticline or Paleozoic, he defines it in the fewest possible terms the first time it is used.

Were not the phrase "distinct contribution" being so grievously overworked these days, I should not hesitate to use it in this connection. Snider's *Earth History* should be to geology what Will Durant's *Story of Philosophy* has been to that subject. It is a sort of a birds-eye-view of the entire science of geology, but non-technical, readable, understandable.

A word should be said about the 335 illustrations. So far as I am able to judge, this is the best illustrated book on geology so far published in America. Every photograph means something. With relatively few exceptions, all the pictures are original, in the sense that they have not been used before for illustrative purposes. The files of such institutions as the U. S. Geological Survey, the Canadian Geological Survey, The Field Museum, the American Museum, the New York Botanical Garden, and similar organizations have been drawn upon for photographs. This means that the best illustrations in North America have been used in the book. There are also many illustrative diagrams

and charts which aid greatly in the understanding of the text.

The index is unusually complete. The book has 683 pages and is attractively bound in blue cloth.

Old timers on the campus of the University of Oklahoma will have no difficulty in remembering the author. Luther C. Snider came to Norman in September, 1908, as chemist for the Oklahoma Geological Survey. In 1910 he became assistant director of the survey and served in that capacity until 1915, when he resigned to become associated with the geological department of the Empire Fuel Company, of which he was later made chief. For some years now he has been personal geological advisor to Henry L. Doherty, with an office at 60 Wall street, New York City.

He is generally recognized as one of the leading men in the geological fraternity in America. Dr. Snider is first, last and all the time, a genuine scientist. Others may be better executives, or keener business men, or more successful promoters, but Snider is a scientist in the best sense of the term. He has a keen, analytical mind, always searching for new truth and striving to tell it to the world.

At the same time Snider is a writer. We learned that fact in Oklahoma more than two decades ago. While connected with the Oklahoma Geological Survey, Dr. Snider wrote a number of bulletins dealing with clays, road materials, limestones, lead, zinc, asphalt, gypsum, salt, and other economic products of the state, besides several stratigraphic papers of a purely scientific nature. His best known work is Bulletin 27, published in 1917, entitled "Geography of Oklahoma."

This book of 325 pages is by far the most complete treatise on the subject so far written. A copy of *Earth History* will be a valuable addition to any library.—

CHARLES N. GOULD.

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