where some other form of house is commoner than the snowhouse. These are many, for of an estimated current population of 40,000 in all countries, there are less than 10,000 Eskimos who have seen snowhouses and more than 30,000 who have not. There was probably a similar ratio fifty or a hundred and fifty years ago.

When we write English about Eskimo houses, why not call them houses? Then we can use adjectives or qualifying phrases to indicate which of the many types of Eskimo house it is that we are dealing with—sodhouse, snowhouse, earth-covered log cabin, pile dwelling, or what not.

VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON

THE HARVARD CLUB,
NEW YORK CITY

TRUTH VERSUS ADVERTISING

THERE appeared large advertisements quite recently in about two hundred and fifty of the largest newspapers throughout the country, in magazines and other media of advertising, proclaiming that I say that a certain tooth paste is made from the most effective agents and is to be preferred, that I agree with a certain "eminent international scientist" who finds this tooth paste is greatest of the thirty-three dentifrices he tested, that I agree with another "distinguished scientist" to the effect that as a cleansing dentifrice this tooth paste has no equal. Some of these advertisements elaborate at length on the fact that the tooth paste "has the greatest action because of its low surface tension." The same ads carry the statements that I agree with these observations.

In the interest of justice to plain truth and in fairness to myself I hope you will let me state in your columns that I have never made such claims for any dentifrice, in fact my own work doesn't show any great difference in cleansing action between the different soap—abrasive (chalk, etc.) dentifrices. As to the matter of surface tension, I have never seen the work referred to and know nothing of it. It seems plausible that the large amount of soap present would lower the surface tension of the tooth paste-saliva mixture, but if that is the main thing desired why not just use soap?

I have given permission to publish a statement from an earlier publication (1923) based on my work. This statement reads "First, that the resting saliva of the ordinary person, while very slightly acid, is practically neutral; and if its slight acidity has any possible injurious effect, it is insignificant in comparison with that due to decaying food particles. Second, it follows that a dentifrice the chief object of which is to clean the teeth and which is compounded primarily with a view to incorporating in it the most effective cleansing agents, is to be preferred to one which relies primarily upon ingredients put in to effect other objects."

H. H. BUNZELL, PH.D.

NEW YORK, N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Peru from the Air. By LIEUTENANT GEORGE R. JOHNSON, with Text and Notes by Raye R. Platt. New York: The American Geographical Society, 1930, 177 pp., 142 aerial photographs, 11 maps and sketches. Price $5.00.

To attempt a review of this extremely interesting book, without having visited Peru, is somewhat presumptuous, but after reading the book the reviewer is more than ever convinced that aerial photographs offer the geographer the best available medium for illustrating the physiography of a country, and he now feels that he has a better conception of the topography of Peru than he could possibly acquire by a tour of any reasonable length. Most of the readers of SCIENCE living in the United States have traversed the Allegheny Mountains either by train or by motor, but even if they have ridden over every railroad and motored over every highway in this region they can not begin to have as comprehensive an impression of its topography as they could get by a few flights in an airplane. Perhaps only a small proportion of the students of geography have had the funds or the inclination for travel by air over the regions they wished to study, but travel rates by air are now about as cheap as by rail and modern airplanes are if anything safer vehicles for travel than automobiles. But even if the geographer can not or is not willing to fly, the camera can record all the features he could have seen and, with proper titles and descriptive notes, the photographs offer him a substitute which is often better than the reality.

This is the second book of this kind published by the American Geographical Society. "The Face of the Earth as seen from the Air," by Willis T. Lee, is already a classic and is in the libraries of most American physiographers. "Peru from the Air" is even better because it gives a comprehensive cross-section of the topography of the region under discussion rather than scattered physiographic types.

The arrangement of the book is unusual. In the first place, the author is really Mr. Platt, and the title might well have been "Peru from the Air, by

Raye R. Platt, illustrated by aerial photographs taken by Lieutenant George R. Johnson." It is true that Johnson's photographs made the book possible, but without Platt's descriptive text and explanatory notes the publication would have failed entirely as a monograph on the geography of Peru. The fact that Platt is a member of the staff of the American Geographical Society is probably the cause of this submerging of authorship credit. However, the photographs are so excellent in quality and tone and the air view-points have been selected with such good judgment that Johnson can not be given too much credit for his efforts.

The forty pages of text are called an "Introduction" but really form a brief but comprehensive monograph on the Peruvian landscape. The complete—even voluminous—titles of the photographs which follow supplement the text in an admirable way and carry the reader first along the coast and through the coastal valleys and ranges, next through the high pampas, then over the old volcanoes of the western Andes, and finally over the eastern valleys and lowlands.

The half-tone work is excellent, and apparently little has been lost in reproduction of the photographs, a pleasing and somewhat unusual result of efforts of this kind.

Almost any of the photographs taken at random offer fascinating subjects for study; for example, the five photographs of the Colca River Canyon and Valley reproduced in Figs. 23 to 28 show the character of the high surrounding mountains, steep canyons and deeply eroded valleys, with a minuteness of detail that at each glance reveals new and interesting features which compel the reader to study first one and then another repeatedly. The photograph of the Paramonga sugar plantation reproduced in Fig. 69 gives a more comprehensive view of this large and modern agricultural development than would be possible by any other means. The sand dunes back of Ancon, shown in Fig. 77, as well as other photographs of sand hills and dunes, present material for study of prevailing winds and show how the sand has encroached on the town and limited the usefulness of an excellent seaport.

The large number of photographs of headlands, bays and seaports give the reader an excellent conception of the coast line of Peru—probably a better one than a sea traveler can get even by cruising close inshore. These views are made all the more interesting by Platt's descriptive titles, based on his intimate knowledge of the geography and economic conditions of the country.

The mountain photographs are remarkable. The views of El Misti in Figs. 21 and 122 could possibly be duplicated from ground stations, but those of the crater of this old volcano, shown in Figs. 123, 124 and 125, could not be secured except from the air. The views of the lava fields at the base of this mountain, shown in Figs. 126 and 127, exhibit a wealth of detail that would delight a topographer engaged in mapping the region, for all he would need to secure in the field would be of a few elevations and positions and he could draw the details later in his office better than he could in the field. In this case, the two photographs overlap, but the page arrangement is unfortunate and should be reversed to show the proper sequence.

The mosaic of the Chillon Valley shown in Fig. 3 is an excellent example of the art of mosaic making. The assemblage of photographs is well matched and well toned, so that it is difficult to find the cut lines. Moreover the illustration has apparently lost none of the detail of the original, which is somewhat unusual in copying mosaics. The other mosaic of the pueblo of Pisco, shown in Fig. 110, is not so well reproduced, and suggests a considerable amount of retouching by the artist, and some enlargement in copying. However, the details are clear and the pattern of the streets and buildings in the old town is exceedingly interesting.

Another and very much older example of "town planning" is illustrated in Figs. 11 and 12, which show the pre-Incaic "palaces" of Chan-Chan. These two photographs overlap, and again the arrangement is faulty and the two photographs should have been interchanged, so that the reader could see them in panoramic form.

The reviewer's only warrant for discussing the book is to encourage the effort, to ask for more, and to recommend its reading by all who are interested in geographic study.

C. H. BIRDSEYE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

A NEW BOOK ON BEETLES

IN 1883 Drs. John L. LeConte and George H. Horn, the two most eminent coleopterists this country ever had or probably ever will have, issued, as No. 507 of the Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, their "Classification of the Coleoptera of North America." Based upon their practical knowledge of the anatomy of typical members of the order Coleoptera and the correct function of the various organs of the body of a beetle, gained through long years of intensive study, and their familiarity with the literature then extant of the most noted of European coleopterists, LeConte and Horn brought together in one volume a veritable storehouse of knowledge regarding the structure, relationship and classification of the beetles at that time known to science of the entire