

then the sea, stratification, coral; and lastly earthquakes and volcanoes.

Now this is just right. Physical Geography ought to contain the dynamics of geology, and not be a mere description of the physical condition of the globe. A description of the plateaus and primary mountain chains, and secondary mountain chains, and plains and river systems of all the countries in the world, and distribution of birds, beasts, and fishes, used to be what was called physical geography: and in it the dynamical element, all idea of change and progress was almost entirely left out. All this description constitutes geographical knowledge, but is of the nature of information pure and simple, and has absolutely no value in education except as an exercise in memory, and as a basis for reasoning, supposing that this reasoning is ever superposed. But what Prof. Geikie gives us is the very life and soul of geological science, observation on what the natural forces around us are doing, information as to what they are doing of the like kind elsewhere, and reasoning on the effect of these forces. It is a book which will at once rouse the curiosity of a child, and train it as far as it goes in sound scientific method.

It is admirably adapted to be a reading book in elementary schools, and it is much to be hoped that it will be largely used. But for this purpose a cheaper edition ought to be published. J. M. W.

OUR BOOK SHELF

Exalted States of the Nervous System. By R. H. Collyer, M.D. (H. Renshaw.)

It can only be with a feeling of regret that anyone can see so many pages, nearly 150, occupied with matter and arguments most of which had much better have been retained only among the oral traditions of the author's acquaintances, for by publishing them he lays himself open to the severe criticisms of a non-appreciating scientific public. That Dr. Collyer was among the first to propose and employ anaesthetics, we will not question, but he cannot expect to increase the number of his supporters by the publication of such a work as the above, in which his want of knowledge of the first principles of scientific method and physiological fact is rendered too clear. An instance or two will suffice to indicate the manner in which the subject is treated. Speaking of chloral, he says—"It is administered by the stomach. . . . It seems that the action is immediate on the brain, through the eighth pair of nerves." This is very different from the explanation of the discoverer of that substance, and quite contrary to any explanation of value that has been since proposed. The physiological dogma on which the author bases many of his arguments is that "the lungs at every respiration send vital electricity to the brain, which has been thus assimilated to subserve the purposes of life." In a newspaper account of the relative chances of the Oxford and Cambridge crews for 1871, the author finds sufficient to justify the following valuable generalisation:—"thus endurance does not belong to mere size." We think these quotations sufficient.

The Botanists' Pocket-book: containing in a tabulated form the chief characteristics of British plants. By W. R. Hayward. (Bell and Daldy, 1872.)

A BOOK of modest pretensions, and not without its value. As a rule there is no class of scientific literature to be more carefully avoided than that which professes to compress the whole of the elements of a science into a small portable volume; nowhere is the master's hand more urgently required than in the compilation of text-books.

Mr. Hayward we do not recollect to have met with before as a botanical writer; this little book, however, evidences great care in its preparation, and the author is careful not to claim for it too high a place. Its object is to "afford information to the tyro, and also to refresh the memory of the more advanced botanist who, by examining on the spot any doubtful plant, may be saved the trouble of carrying home specimens of little value; it is not intended as a book for the study, nor as a rival to the many excellent and complete manuals of our leading botanists; but to be accepted for what it is, viz., 'A Botanist's Pocket-book.'" This purpose it may well serve; occupying not much over 200 pages of thin paper in limp cloth binding, it will be no great burden to the pocket or knapsack, and may frequently be usefully resorted to by a young botanist on the tramp, leaving more careful study till he gets home. A. W. B.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

Perception in the Lower Animals

As several persons seem interested in Mr. Wallace's suggestion that animals find their way home by recognising the odour of the places which they have passed whilst shut up, you may perhaps think the following little fact worth giving. Many years ago I was on a mail-coach, and as soon as we came to a public-house, the coachman pulled up for the fraction of a second. He did so when we came to a second public-house, and I then asked him the reason. He pointed to the off-hand wheeler, and said that she had been long completely blind, and she would stop at every place on the road at which she had before stopped. He had found by experience that less time was wasted by pulling up his team than by trying to drive her past the place, for she was contented with a momentary stop. After this I watched her, and it was evident that she knew exactly, before the coachman began to pull up the other horses, every public-house on the road, for she had at some time stopped at all. I think there can be little doubt that this mare recognised all these houses by her sense of smell. With respect to cats, so many cases have been recorded of their returning from a considerable distance to their homes, after having been carried away shut up in baskets, that I can hardly disbelieve them, though these stories are disbelieved by some persons. Now, as far as I have observed, cats do not possess a very acute sense of smell, and they seem to discover their prey by eyesight and by hearing. This leads me to mention another trifling fact: I sent a riding-horse by railway from Kent *via* Yarmouth, to Freshwater Bay, in the Isle of Wight. On the first day that I rode eastward, my horse, when I turned to go home, was very unwilling to return towards his stable, and he several times turned round. This led me to make repeated trials, and every time that I slackened the reins, he turned sharply round and began to trot to the eastward by a little north, which was nearly in the direction of his home in Kent. I had ridden this horse daily for several years, and he had never before behaved in this manner. My impression was that he somehow knew the direction whence he had been brought. I should state that the last stage from Yarmouth to Freshwater is almost due south, and along this road he had been ridden by my groom; but he never once showed any wish to return in this direction. I had purchased this horse several years before from a gentleman in my own neighbourhood, who had possessed him for a considerable time. Nevertheless it is possible, though far from probable, that the horse may have been born in the Isle of Wight. Even if we grant to animals a sense of the points of the compass, of which there is no evidence, how can we account, for instance, for the turtles which formerly congregated in multitudes, only at one season of the year, on the shores of the Isle of Ascension, finding their way to that speck of land in the midst of the great Atlantic Ocean?

CHARLES DARWIN

The Sense of Smell in Animals

THE hypothesis put forward by Mr. Wallace in NATURE of the 20th ult., to explain the power possessed by some animals of