

information, and the careful student will find scores of facts stated quite simply, and without any attempt to impress the reader, which could be found in no other book in the English language. Whether Prof. Max Müller be all right or all wrong, it must never be forgotten that he is a great linguist as well as an expounder of mythology, and that if some of us hold views other than his, we ought not to belittle the labours of the hard-working scholar who has done so much to explain to two generations of men the lessons which language has to teach. To write easily, accurately, and pleasantly of a difficult subject is a gift which is worth a great deal.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF.

*The Story of the Earth's Atmosphere.* By Douglas Archibald, M.A., Fellow and some time Vice-President of the Royal Meteorological Society. Pp. 208. (London: George Newnes, Ltd., 1897.)

THIS is one of the best of the Story series that we have read, but will probably not prove itself one of the most popular. If this prognostication prove correct, it will be because a large part of the public prefers to be amused rather than instructed. The author has endeavoured to compress too much information within the small compass at his command, and this design has in some measure destroyed the ease with which such a book should be read. The mechanics of the earth's atmosphere is not an easy subject for popular treatment, and though we cannot regret that the attempt has been made to give wider publicity to the work of Ferrel, Helmholtz, and Von Bezold, we cannot help feeling that the result would have been more satisfactory if the author could have given more space to his work, or had ventured to fill a larger canvas. The tale, on the whole, is pleasantly told, and the author is frequently able, from his wide travels, to illustrate his remarks by his own personal experience in climates where meteorological manifestations can be witnessed on a grander scale than in our own country.

Starting with the nature and chemical composition of the atmosphere, the author treats of the circumstances that affect its varying temperature. In this section some of the diagrams might have been a little clearer and a little more finished. The reference letters are in some cases barely legible. We notice, too, a curious sentence on page 52, which will puzzle the student: "As a general rule we find the greatest ranges of temperature of the lowest atmospheric stratum between day and night occur in the driest parts of the earth . . . where it often amounts to 40° F., and the smallest ranges in small oceanic islands, where it is as small as 50° F." From the remarks on temperature the author proceeds to discuss the winds and general circulation of the atmosphere, but the description of the more local phenomena of cyclones is deferred till after the consideration of precipitation. Some little improvement would, we think, result from a different arrangement of the chapters, which would not only have brought the same class of phenomena more closely together, but might have prevented the partial repetition of some of the facts contained in the earlier chapters. For example, two chapters on the sounds and colours of the atmosphere separate the one on cyclones from that relating to whirlwinds, tornadoes, &c., while the few remarks on dust and disease, in the last chapter, could possibly have found adequate expression in some of the others. But we willingly admit that Mr. Archibald had a very difficult task, and has accomplished it with a great measure of success. He was not willing to give a bare statement of facts, but has everywhere attempted to add an explanation of them. The book is written right up to date; and though some of the explanations may require modification as the study and science of meteor-

ology advance, this is no impeachment of their present value, nor does it imply any fault on the part of the author.

W. E. P.

*Wild Bird Protection and Nesting-Boxes, &c.* By J. R. B. Masefield. 12mo, pp. 129. Illustrated. (Leeds: Taylor Brothers, 1897.)

ALL interested in the preservation of the feathered denizens of our woods, heaths, streams, and lakes (and who is not?), will give a hearty welcome to this useful, although unpretentious, little volume, which seems evidently the work of one well acquainted with his subject. After a short introduction, in which the author tells us that he has induced no less than six-and-thirty species to nest in his own garden, the book is divided into four chapters. The first deals with modern legislation on bird preservation, and the powers which a County Council can acquire for the purpose. In the second, we have a brief account of mediæval laws for the protection of those birds which were becoming scarce in early times. The third, and most generally interesting chapter, gives the author's experiences as to the best mode of attracting different kinds of birds to build; and the contrivances, which he describes so well and figures so admirably, will be found worthy of the best attention of those who may be inclined to devote their spare hours to this pursuit. In the fourth and final chapter, we find lists of the various species scheduled for special protection by different County Councils. From this we are glad to see that a very large percentage of these authorities have taken up the matter in good earnest. If a suggestion may be offered, it would seem preferable, in cases where a large number of species are scheduled, to include all the smaller birds, as otherwise none but a professed ornithologist can determine whether the order has been infringed. R. L.

*Reports from the Laboratory of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh.* Edited by J. Batty Tuke, M.D., and D. Noël Paton, M.D. Vol. vi. Pp. 303. (Edinburgh: William F. Clay, 1897.)

A DESCRIPTION of the new laboratory of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, and a retrospect of the work done in the old laboratory, forms an introduction to this volume. The papers refer to investigations in anatomy, physiology, pathology, and pharmacology. Many of them are of too special a character to be usefully mentioned here, but among the subjects dealt with are: the relationship of the liver to fats, the action of large doses of dilute mineral acids on metabolism, acid and alkali albumin, influence of thyroid feeding on the proteid metabolism in man, the amount of iron in ordinary dietaries and in some articles of food, analyses of iron in the liver and spleen in various diseases affecting the blood, *Catha edulis*—a plant grown in parts of Arabia and Eastern Africa and widely used as a mild stimulant, carbonic acid gases in diseases of the alimentary tract (this paper brings out some interesting points as to the influence of carbonic acid gas upon digestion), and the Malayan arrow poisons.

*First Principles of Natural Philosophy.* By A. E. Dolbear. Pp. x + 318. (London: Ginn and Co., 1897.)

THIS elementary book is intended for those who wish to obtain some knowledge concerning the more generally recognised problems and principles pertaining to physics. With this object in view, the author has restricted himself to a simple exposition of the subject, and, with the further help of numerous illustrations and worked-out examples, the reader is made acquainted with the fundamental laws and principles relating to heat, optics, electricity, magnetism, &c. The mathematical treatment of the subject is, for the most part, laid on one side, only that of the most elementary character being attempted. The beginner, however, should get a fair insight into the subject if he uses this book as a first step to a more elaborate treatise, and in this respect it should find many readers.