

must be studied in comparison with those of the Malay Peninsula for the purposes of his work, we would suggest to Mr. Distant that he would add greatly to its value to all European collectors if he would give, in a supplementary part, a complete synopsis of the known species of butterflies inhabiting the Indo-Malayan region. Having figured all the continental Malayan species, the descriptions of those of the islands might be, in most cases, by comparative characters, aided occasionally, perhaps, by outline woodcuts. We believe that such an extension of the scope of the work would double its value, and add largely to the list of subscribers; while the increased expenditure would be comparatively unimportant.

A. R. W.

*Conic Sections Treated Geometrically.* By S. H. Haslam, M.A., and J. Edwards, M.A. (London: Longmans, 1881.)

THIS is a neat little treatise on the conic sections, containing—what appears to be a novelty—a method of *plane projection*, to which the authors give the name of *Focal Projection*. The remarkable feature of the book is, that the authors, who are evidently well up in these curves, should not be acquainted with the writings of the present master of St. John's College, on the same subject. No one who has looked into Dr. Taylor's recent works, could be unacquainted with what he has said upon the contributions of Boscovich and G. Walker, and would hardly use the "generating circle" of a conic in the same fashion as Boscovich does, and write, after the definition, "which we have called the *auxiliary circle of a point*."

*Schwatka's Search: Sledging in the Arctic in Quest of the Franklin Records.* By W. H. Gilder. Maps and Illustrations. (London: Sampson Low and Co.)

THIS is the complete record of the expedition sent out by private subscription, in 1878, under Lieut. Schwatka, to endeavour to find the records of the Franklin expedition, which were reported to be in possession of the Nechelli Eskimo. With the general results of the expedition, our readers have already been made acquainted. The reported records, as might have been expected, were never found. But in and around the Fish River, and in King William Land and neighbourhood, several relics were obtained, and several graves and cairns found. The expedition, indeed, completed the story of the sad disaster of the *Erebus* and *Terror*. During the search, sledge-journeys of upwards of 3000 miles were made, and thus much welcome additional information was obtained concerning the country between Hudson's Bay and King William Sound. The expedition came a good deal into contact with the Eskimo, concerning whom Mr. Gilder has much to tell us. The narrative is interesting, and is welcome as throwing additional light on an Arctic expedition in which Englishmen have always continued to be interested. There are a number of good illustrations.

*Chambers's Etymological Dictionary of the English Language.* A new and thoroughly revised edition. Edited by Andrew Findlater, M.A., LL.D. (Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers, 1882.)

THIS little work, since the publication of the first edition, edited by the late Mr. James Donald, has had deservedly a very extensive circulation. It is just the book to have at one's elbow for constant reference, handy, clearly printed, fairly full, and thoroughly trustworthy. This new edition has evidently been so thoroughly revised by Dr. Findlater, as to be virtually a new work. The selection of words has been made with great discrimination, the definitions are clear and comprehensive, and the etymologies up to the latest results of linguistic research. The dictionary contains a large number of scientific terms, though there are one or two others that we think ought to have found a place. The dictionary is the best

of its class; the appendix contains much useful information, including a table of the Metric System.

*Tunis; The Land and the People.* By the Chevalier de Hesse-Wartegg. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1882.)

HERR VON HESSE-WARTEGG spent some months in Tunis last year, and has made a readable book out of his notes. He has also drawn largely on other sources of information, so that those who know little about a country which has been so much before the public recently, will find some useful information in this volume. The author spent a good deal of time about Tunis and its environs, but seems also to have visited several other places in the Regency, including, apparently, Kairwan. He tells us a good deal about the people and their customs, about the government, the Bishas, antiquities, &c. There are several good illustrations, but no map.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

[The Editor urgently requests correspondents to keep their letters as short as possible. The pressure on his space is so great that it is impossible otherwise to ensure the appearance even of communications containing interesting and novel facts.]

#### Silurian Fossils in the North-west Highlands

ON my return to-day from a geological tour in the North-west Highlands, I read with much interest the letters of Mr. Huddleston and Prof. Bonney on the above subject. The question as to the geological position of the limestone series in West Ross-shire, correlated by Murchison with the Durness limestone, is one to which I devoted special attention during my late visit to the neighbourhoods of Lochs Carron, Doule, Kishorn, and Maree. The general appearance of the limestone in these areas is sufficiently like that of Durness to lead to the supposition that it is of the same age, but this of course can only be proved by fossil evidence. The conclusion at which I have arrived, however, in regard to the geological position of the limestone, and as to its relation to the so-called Upper Gneiss rocks of the central parts of Ross-shire, is in direct opposition to the views of Murchison, and accords in the main with that of Prof. Nicol. The great triangular patch at the head of Loch Kishorn consists of a series of thick beds of grey limestone, with a few bands of sandstone in an unaltered condition, and is undoubtedly dropped by faults amongst much older strata, as maintained by Prof. Nicol. Between Lochs Carron and Doule the same series is seen to rest unconformably upon much higher beds than those which it is supposed by Murchison and others to underlie at Loch Kishorn. As I purpose shortly to give a full account of these researches, I will not venture now to trespass further on your space.

HENRY HICKS

Hendon, N.W., April 29

#### Earthquakes and Mountain Ranges

IN NATURE of the 27th ult., in a note on a recent meeting of the Seismological Society of Japan, it is mentioned that the observations of Prof. Milne "as far as they have at present gone, show in a remarkable manner how a large mountain range absorbs earthquake energy." It may be worth while to mention, as an exception to this, that the Swiss earthquake at 1 p.m. on July 25, 1855, which apparently had its origin among the mountains on the south side of the Valais, between Visp and S. Nicholas, both of which places were seriously damaged, travelled through the Bernese Oberland, across the great valley of Switzerland, and then through the Jura. I was at the time in a small inn, at a place called Belle Rive in the Munster Thal, on the north side of the Jura. The house was severely shaken, so that some plaster fell from the ceiling. This was about seventy-five miles from the place of origin, and the wave in that interval had passed through two mountain ranges. It is probable that this earthquake was caused by a disturbance of a quite different kind from the volcanic disturbances of Japan, and that may account for a difference in the result.

O. FISHER