

ferent museums that the Japanese have adopted this mode of education along with their other advances in civilisation. One of the most interesting features of the present list is the additional knowledge acquired by Mr. Snow's visit to the Kuril Islands, which locality, however, does not seem to be very rich in land-birds, though many wading-birds—gulls and petrels—appear to have been noticed. The authors have carefully identified all the species which have come under their notice, and in doubtful cases have forwarded specimens to England for comparison, so that little fault can be found with the present list, which seems to be the result of much good sound work, and we congratulate the authors on having placed the ornithology of Japan on such a satisfactory footing. A comparison of some of the smaller owls with the type specimens in the British Museum would appear desirable, and we have no doubt that Mr. Bowdler Sharpe would assist the authors, if specimens were forwarded to him for identification.

ICELAND

Summer Travelling in Iceland. By John Coles, F.R.A.S. (London: Murray, 1882.)

By Fell and Fjord. By E. G. Oswald. (London: Blackwood, 1882.)

THE most prominent—we ought perhaps to say, the one redeeming—feature of Mr. Coles's work is the fact that he occupied himself by taking observations of heights, temperatures, distances, and magnetic variations while travelling in Iceland. This is rarely done because of the difficulty of carrying instruments over a very rough, and in some places pathless, country. The result has been that the map appended to "Summer Travelling" is perhaps the most accurate which has yet appeared. Mount Paul, and a few more-familiar names, are strangely enough not inserted, but, on the other hand, the heights of the principal mountains and highlands are given in English feet; the crater of Askja is shown of its proper form; and the details of the Sprengisandr route are mapped. At the same time, the map is not so *clear* as that of Gunnlaugsson, who was careful to indicate the different surface soils—lava, sand, heath, &c.—by differences both of shading and of colour. If those who travel in a little-known country would provide themselves with a good aneroid, compass, and thermometer, and would learn before starting how to use them, and maintain a habit of using them constantly while on their travels, like Mr. Coles, it would be to the great advantage of science.

According to Mr. Coles, the magnetic variation in the extreme west of Iceland is 43° W., while on the east coast it is 34° W., and the compass error in different parts of the islands will thus vary by three-quarters of a point. Thus in the W. of the island the compass box must be turned until the N. end of the magnetic needle is over N.W., while in the E. of the island the N. end would require to be placed over N.W. by N., and then all the points marked on the card would indicate true bearings.

We may mention also a capital plan of the Haukadahl Geysirs, better, we believe, than any one which has appeared since that of Baring Gould.

Apart from the observations, the book contains nothing which is new to Icelandic travellers, or to those acquainted

with the literature relating to travel in that country. The description of the Thingvellir-Geysir-Hekla-Krisuvik route, is as old as the hills, and becomes infinitely wearisome from much repetition. Four chapters out of eleven take us only as far as Hekla, and then the author did not ascend it. The journey across the Sprengisandr was quite uneventful, and the detour to Askja was without interest—that is, it did not bring to light any facts not previously observed by Prof. Johnstrup, Lieut. Maroc, or Mr. W. G. Lock. Also when we read that "Summer Travelling in Iceland" is a "narrative of two journeys across the island by unfrequented routes," we are disappointed to find the less frequented route without any interest, and the other by no means "unfrequented," but in fact the ordinary mail route between Akureyri and Reykjavik.

During the last twenty years books on Iceland have multiplied too rapidly, and there is no need for another work on the subject, unless it deals with some special features of the country scientifically, or unless it is a record of exploration, like plucky Mr. Watts's record of a journey "Across the Vatna Jökull." If somebody will further explore this tract of unknown country larger than Lincolnshire, or ascend and measure virgin peaks, or trace the lava streams of Koétla to their source, or minutely survey the Krafla district, we shall welcome their records with open arms.

"By Fell and Fjord" is a bright, pleasantly written book, by a lady who has visited Iceland three times, has travelled over some of the less frequented paths, and has entered with wonderful spirit into the nature of the weird volcanic surroundings, and the tone and temper of the people, the language, and the literature. Miss Oswald is so fond of everything connected with the island, that she has braved discomforts which few ladies would willingly face. Her bravery impresses us immensely: she never feared to ford the most dangerous glacier river, never quaked while crossing the most treacherous bog, and was never discouraged by misfortunes caused by bad weather or a mistaken route. And then she is genuinely enthusiastic about the scenery, the wild gipsy life, and the cordial kindly people.

G. F. RODWELL

OUR BOOK SHELF

Madeira: its Scenery, and How to see it. (London: Stanford, 1882.)

A USEFUL handbook to Madeira has just been published by Messrs. Stanford. It can hardly lay claim to be a scientific work, yet a fair knowledge of botany and kindred subjects is pre-supposed to exist by its author, Miss Ellen Taylor, and much of the interest in the excursions detailed is due to the introduction of this element. It presents, in fact, a very marked improvement over ordinary handbooks, and the treatment of the natural history section is excellent.

There is little of history to relate, and even the discovery of the island, which took place as recently as the early part of the fifteenth century, is involved in some obscurity. The race is mixed, and the aristocracy at least seems to have been recruited from Italy, France, and Flanders. The island is entirely volcanic, and no rocks earlier than Miocene exist in it. When volcanic action ceased is unknown, but even the most recent lavas seem to have suffered great denudation—no vapours are now exhaled—and the island is profoundly quiescent save from occasional earthquakes, as in 1748. The vast