

*Defective Eyesight.* By Dr. D. B. St. John Roosa. Pp. ix + 186. (New York: The Macmillan Co. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1899.)

DR. ROOSA'S book is pleasantly written and easy to follow, but it is not very clear what particular place in ophthalmic literature the book is intended to occupy. From the superficial manner in which each subject is treated it would appear to be intended for the instruction of the junior student.

But a student's manual on the refraction of the eye in which no mention is made of retinoscopy, and the ophthalmoscope is only casually referred to as being unnecessary in most refraction cases, is certainly somewhat incomplete.

Most people will agree with Dr. Roosa in condemning the permanent wearing of prisms in the treatment of heterophoria. But the statement that want of balance of the external ocular muscles never causes asthenopic symptoms, is contrary to the experience of the majority of ophthalmologists.

We thoroughly endorse the author's views as to the practical value of the ophthalmometer, though he overstates the case when he says that, to a competent observer, no mistake is possible in the estimation of astigmatism with this instrument. Those who have used both ophthalmometric and other methods with the same patient, in any considerable number of cases, will agree with Adolphe Javal, jun., that corneal astigmatism often differs from the total astigmatism by 0.5 to 0.75 dioptre.

*The Lancashire Sea Fisheries.* By Charles L. Jackson, M.I.C.E., &c. Pp. viii + 85. (Manchester: Heywood and Son, 1899.)

THIS is a reprint of a lecture delivered in the Chadwick Museum, apparently under the auspices of the Bolton Corporation. It is full of obvious inaccuracies, is hopelessly out of date, and contains on nearly every page cheap sneers at "pure science" and "the scientists," as opposed to the "business" and "practical men." There is a good deal about "Dame Nature" and "Old Ocean," and "the Great Author of the Universe," with whom the author of the book seems to be on curiously confidential terms. This is a work which, if taken seriously, is calculated, we fear, to do much harm—not to the County Council against whose labours it is directed, but to the fishermen in whose interests it professes to be written—by stirring up bad feeling, class prejudices, and opposition to constituted authority.

*A Country Schoolmaster, James Shaw, of Tynron, Dumfriesshire.* Edited by Robert Wallace. Pp. xcvi + 392. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., Ltd., 1899.)

WE have first a sketch of the life and work of James Shaw; but the bulk of the book is occupied with reprints of some of his more characteristic literary productions. These are upon a great variety of subjects, mostly connected with natural history. The early years of James Shaw's life were spent as a pattern designer and calico printer, and it was not till he was over thirty years of age that he became the schoolmaster at Tynron, a country parish in Dumfriesshire. He continued there for thirty-four years. In the early part of his career his tastes were chiefly literary, and he acquired considerable power as a writer both of prose and verse. After he became a country schoolmaster he devoted himself entirely to natural history and archæology. His papers collected in the present volume are of real interest, and charmingly written. After looking through them we feel the justice of his friend's remark: "Shaw was a large man, fated to play out his life-drama on a small and dimly-lighted stage."

#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

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#### Apparent Dark Lightning Flashes.

LAST night during a thunderstorm of rare severity in which brilliant flashes—single, double, triple, or quadruple—followed one another at intervals often of not more than a few seconds of time, I was surprised to see with great vividness, on a suddenly illuminated sky, two nearly vertical lines of darkness, each of the ordinary jagged appearance of a bright flash of lightning. I remembered to have seen two real flashes of just the same shapes and relative positions, and I concluded that the black flashes were due to their residual influence on the retina. I turned my eyes quickly from the dark sky outside to an illuminated wall inside the house, and I again saw the same double dark "flash," which verified my conclusion in an interesting manner. The fatigued part of the eye failed to perceive the sudden brightness of the sky in the one case and of the wall in the other.

Aix-les-Bains, August 7.

KELVIN.

#### MEETING OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AT PORTSMOUTH.

A GOODLY number of members of this pre-eminent practical Association journeyed last week to Portsmouth to be present at the sixty-seventh annual meeting. The place of meeting was not so attractive as last year, and perhaps on this account the attendance was somewhat smaller. The subject-matter, however, at Portsmouth was quite as interesting as that at Edinburgh; and those who, braving almost tropical heat, were diligent in their attendance at the meetings got their reward, and will return home with ample food for thought.

After an eloquent and interesting address from the President, Dr. Ward Cousins, in which a sketch was given of the progress made in medicine and surgery during the present century, the meeting divided itself up into sections, and settled down to work.

*Section of Medicine.*—An address on medicine was delivered by Sir Richard Douglas Powell, his subject being recent advances in practical medicine. Under this heading various points of practical interest were discussed. The use of the binaural stethoscope received some attention, the author somewhat deploring the decadence of the old rigid stethoscope, a flexible instrument being incapable of transmitting tactile impulses. Under the head of "Anomalous Fevers," Sir Richard discussed shortly the important subject of mixed infection. The value of what was said on serum therapy was enhanced by the addition of a table indicating the actions of the various sera. Under the "Prevention and Treatment of Tuberculosis" the vexed question of the influence of heredity was considered, the author apparently attaching more importance to this influence than recent investigations would seem to justify. The address concluded with a few suggestive hints concerning a possible pre-parasitic existence of the tubercle bacillus.

At the opening of the section, the President, Dr. Mitchell Bruce, made a few introductory remarks with regard to the subjects of discussion, viz. the tests for admission into the public services, and Tuberculosis. Sir Dyce Duckworth's paper upon the former subject, in his unavoidable absence, was read by the President. The paper comprised a valuable critique of the methods of examination at present adopted by the public services, and a consideration of the causes and rejection of defective candidates. An animated discussion followed this paper. Prof. Osler advocated that the physical examination of candidates should take place earlier in the course of their training, and alluded to the more common causes of, according to him, unnecessary