

type is good and the illustrations form an important feature, being artistic and at the same time expressive and useful.

Physiology for Beginners. By Leonard Hill, M.B., F.R.S. Pp. viii + 124. (London: Edward Arnold, 1902.) Price 1s.

IN this tiny volume the author has set himself the difficult task, as he describes it in his preface, of putting in simple language the essential facts concerning the structure and functions of the human body.

The book is intended for junior students who have no previous knowledge of the subject, and it may be said that the author has put forward the main essentials of the subject in an attractive way such as ought to engage the interest of school children, for whom the book is obviously intended. The author clothes his subject in the homeliest possible phraseology, avoiding technical terms and hard names so far as can be done in dealing with such an abstruse subject, and instead of giving dull definitions he suggests and then answers questions which must arouse interest in the juvenile mind.

Although mainly written for use as an elementary school book, the volume may be recommended to anyone who wishes to obtain some knowledge of the functions of the different organs of the body without the trouble of a detailed or technical study of the subject.

The book is artistically got up and adorned with many clear and well-drawn illustrations of the subject-matter.

B. MOORE.

Die Philosophie August Comte's. By L. Lévy-Bruhl. German translation by H. Molenaar. Pp. 286. (Leipzig: Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1902.) Price Mk. 6.

THIS is a careful translation into German of a full and sympathetic study of Comte's positivist philosophy in all its aspects. M. Lévy-Bruhl is not one of those more cautious disciples who, like Littré, rejected Comte's religion in the name of his philosophy. He boldly defends the whole later development with its curious substitute for Catholicism as a necessary consequence of the original Comtian conception of a reform of society operating by means of a reform of philosophy. The actual subject of his book is, however, the philosophy apart from the subsequent developments. He treats with lucidity and knowledge in his first book of the foundations of the positivist doctrine, the alleged "law of the three stages," the classification of the sciences and the concept of law. In books ii. and iii. he presents a sketch of the natural and social sciences, exhibiting their interrelation. The concluding book is devoted to an exposition of the positivist ethics. The translation reads well and pleasantly, and makes one wish that we in England, where Comte is more talked about than studied, possessed a statement of his doctrine at once so lucid and so concise.

A. E. T.

Elementary Coal Mining. By George L. Kerr. Pp. 225. (London: Charles Griffin and Co., Ltd. 1902.) Price 3s. 6d.

THIS volume "is meant as an introductory manual to the larger and more advanced text-books." The subject-matter is dealt with in fourteen chapters, at the end of each of which there are examination questions. The information is given concisely and in a form adapted for easy assimilation by students preparing for the examinations held under the Education Department and the County Councils and under the Home Office for under-managers' certificates. There is no striking novelty in arrangement or in the matter dealt with. The 200 illustrations are good and clear. Several of them appear to have been borrowed from Mr. Herbert W. Hughes's well-known text-book, with no mention of the source.

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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 intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

Earthquake of May 28 at the Cape, and Coincident Meteorological Effects.

AS certain peculiar meteorological phenomena seem to have been closely associated with the earthquake felt in the Cape Peninsula on May 28, the following particulars of this occurrence seem to deserve notice.

After being practically calm all day, a loud sound resembling a clap of thunder or the rumbling of approaching heavy waggons was heard about 11.45 p.m. (Cape mean time of $22\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ east), followed in Cape Town and Green Point by a heavy downpour of rain, and in the suburbs by a severe squall of wind and rain; practically simultaneous with the sound there occurred a shaking and rattling of windows and doors; some state they felt also a distinct shock, others that their beds rocked, while information was received of the cracking of the walls of at least two dwelling houses. The wind-squall was strong enough to uproot or blow down trees in some of the eastern suburbs. One gentleman, whose written account is in our possession, states that "it fairly shook the room and its contents which I occupy at Rosebank; shortly afterwards a similar sound (tremor?) was felt; it lasted only a few seconds and died away." Dogs were apparently conscious of the occurrence, one which was never known to be affected by thunder or lightning moving about and whining in a peculiar manner, while a parrot indicated by its screeching that it was sensible of something unusual happening.

Our meteorological records show that rain fell (except on May 19) every day from May 17 to May 24, amounting to 3.10 inches at the Royal Observatory and to 7.45 inches at Newlands. Between the 24th and 28th, although no rain fell, there was almost an entire absence of drying winds, being chiefly light from the N.W., from which direction comes the bulk of the Cape Peninsula rainfall.

Barometric pressure was high¹, 30.071 inches at 8 a.m. on May 27, but fell steadily to 29.775 inches at 6 p.m. on May 28, after which it remained stationary, so far as hourly eye-readings showed, until 11 p.m.; between 11 p.m. and midnight it fell to 29.717 inches, and rose rapidly to 29.771 inches at 12.15 a.m. on May 29, to 29.809 inches at 12.25 a.m., and to 29.817 at 12.30 a.m., unusually large and rapid fluctuations for the Cape Peninsula, and suggesting at once the presence of thunderstorms in the neighbourhood. These rapid variations in pressure might account for the rumbling sound, on the supposition of it being thunder, also for the wind-squall, and even for the rattling of doors and windows (not affected by ordinary winds), but fails to account for the "rocking" of the beds, the cracking of walls and the unusual behaviour of the dog already mentioned, all these inducing the belief that an actual "earthquake" was experienced.

No record of any seismic disturbance was, however, shown on the seismometer at the Royal Observatory.

The lightkeeper at Cape Point makes these remarks on his meteorological schedule for May:—"28th: wind S.E. to S.W., light; silent lightning from N. to N.W. at 8 p.m., then thick fog from 10.30 p.m., and a light drizzling shower at 11.45 p.m. Fog and rain till midnight, then thunder and lightning at midnight; again rain off and on from 1.40 a.m. till 8 a.m. on May 29."

Through the courtesy of Mr. D. E. Hutchins, Conservator of Forests, the writer has been enabled to examine his barogram obtained at Cape Town for the period between Tuesday, May 27, and Sunday, June 1. This record shows a dip in the curve occurring after 11 p.m. on May 28. Similar irregularities are recorded for the early mornings of May 29 and 31; these too were associated with thunderstorms, but may be connected with the West Indian eruptions of about the same date, an account of which is given in your issue of June 5.

In the absence of fuller information than is in our possession at present, no definite connection can be traced, but these phenomena seem to be closely related one to the other. At least, it will be admitted that a comparison of this barographic curve with the diary of events in the West Indies shows some

¹ Corrected to 32° Fahr., but not to sea-level; approximate height of barometer, 40 feet.