

is the duty of philosophers to go on trying to make them, with which, no doubt, both pragmatists and absolutists would agree. Indeed, "in spite of everything, this is presumably the real standpoint of all of us."

Lessons on Elementary Hygiene and Sanitation, with Special Reference to the Tropics. By W. T. Prout. Second edition, 1909. Pp. xx+159. (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1908.) Price 2s. 6d. net.

WE are not surprised that this little book has passed into a second edition. The plan of it is well conceived and the matter excellently written. It tells in the simplest language, with many appropriate comparisons which drive home the meaning, the structure of the body and its functions, how health may be safeguarded, and how disease is propagated. Disease germs, their mode of spread and entrance into the body, are explained, and the salient points with regard to the principal infective diseases are adequately considered. Being avowedly written for residents in the tropics, and in particular for those in Freetown, West Africa, diseases like malaria, cholera, plague, sleeping sickness, leprosy, &c., receive considerable attention, but otherwise the details given are equally applicable to the hygiene of any district.

Chapters on water supply and its purification, the dwelling and sewage removal, respiration and ventilation, diet and clothing are included, and render the book a complete popular exposition of the principles of hygiene. It is also well and sufficiently illustrated. R. T. H.

Aëroplane Patents. By Robt. M. Neilson. Pp. x+91. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1910.) Price 4s. 6d. net.

THIS is a useful book, which may be recommended to all who are interested in the subject of aeronautics. It begins with thirteen pages of sound advice to inventors, and continues with a list and description of the various patents relating to heavier-than-air flying machines. The list does not profess to be complete or exhaustive, but it contains all the important patents and most of the minor ones are mentioned. The descriptions given are sufficient to explain the objects and claims made in each case.

The period covered by the list extends from 1860 to 1910, and perhaps the most interesting matter which it brings to our notice is the enormous increase in the number of patents relating to aeronautics taken out since 1907. From 1860 to 1906 the average number of patents was about six per year. In 1906 the number was 29; in 1907, 42; in 1908, 115; in 1909, 759; and in 1910 (for eight months), 412.

That but a small percentage of the patents should be of value is only what might be expected, but the total number is evidence of the attention which is being given to the subject.

Stray Leaves on Travel, Sport, Animals, and Kindred Subjects. By J. C. Walter. Pp. xii+295. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1910.) Price 5s. net.

THE ten chapters making up this book are for the most part extracts from the author's diaries written among the scenes described, and papers prepared for meetings of a natural history society.

The conversational style adopted makes reading easy, and the persevering reader will incidentally accumulate much useful information about the countries in which the author has travelled, and become acquainted with the habits of many animals which have aroused the author's interest. Mr. Walter's wanderings have by no means been confined to his

own country; we have chapters dealing with his excursions in Egypt and Palestine, France, Switzerland, and Italy respectively. On each of his numerous journeys Mr. Walter was an industrious diarist.

1200 Mining Examination Questions. Arranged and compiled by G. L. Kerr. Pp. xxvii+111. (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, 1911.) Price 2s. 6d. net.

THESE questions have been selected principally from the papers set at the examinations held in the different districts of Britain for managers' and under-managers' certificates. The volume also contains copies of ventilation plans set at these examinations, and suggestions to candidates who desire to qualify for mine managers' certificates.

To some of the questions answers have been given, but to the majority of them this has intentionally not been done. The compiler explains that the correct answer for any given question will vary somewhat according to the formula used, and in mining unfortunately no uniform set of formulæ has yet been accepted.

Chez les Français. Edited by H. Carter. With Exercises, by C. F. Shearson. Pp. vii+171+vi. (London: A. and C. Black, 1910.) Price 2s.

THIS well-selected collection of passages in French, from writers of recognised literary merit, dealing with France and French customs, should prove useful in classes where some progress has been made in the study of the language. The book should be particularly serviceable in connection with elementary geographical teaching.

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.]

A Biological Inquiry into the Nature of Melanism in *Amphidasis betularia*, Linn.

IT is well known to entomologists that dark varieties of several species of moths have recently become increasingly common in many localities within the British Isles, and also that the dark forms are appearing in fresh districts.

It is very desirable and important to know whether the colour of these dark races of moths is protective or whether it has some other significance.

Before, however, any definite explanation of these phenomena can be attempted, it is necessary to have as complete a knowledge as possible of all the circumstances which are likely to have any influence on the species known to exhibit this melanic change. One significant point in connection with my inquiry concerns the resting habits of the moths which are subject to this melanic variation. For example, it is important to know whether the light-coloured moths (i.e. the peppered form of *Amphidasis betularia*) generally rest during the day on lichen-covered trunks of trees or any other light-coloured object, and also whether the dark insects (as the form *Doubledayaria* of *A. betularia*) select black tree trunks or other dark-coloured objects on which to rest.

Information of this nature can, however, be obtained only by the cooperation of very many entomologists, for the chance of obtaining sufficient evidence from the observations of one or two persons is very remote. I should therefore be extremely grateful if entomologists would assist me in collecting information regarding the resting habits of any of the undermentioned species belonging to the Geometræ which may have come under their notice:—