

OUR BOOK SHELF

Handbuch der Systematischen Anatomie des Menschen. Von Dr. J. Henle, 1 Band, 1 Abtheilung, Knochenlehre, 3 Auflage, pp. 310. (Braunschweig, 1871. London: Williams & Norgate.)

IT is unnecessary to commend the work of Prof. Henle, which is on the whole the most full and exact yet published. It shares the richness and accuracy of its illustrations with the last edition (the fourth) of Cruveilhier's great work, and shares with it the serious disadvantage of being incomplete. Indeed, while in the latter the part relating to "Angéiologie" which includes the description of the heart, blood-vessels and absorbents, was published in 1867, preceding the completion of the second volume on visceral anatomy in the following year, the third volume of the German work, with the whole of the nervous system, has not yet appeared. In this respect the only English work on descriptive anatomy which can rival Henle's has a great advantage; each edition of what was originally Dr. Quain's Anatomy has been published complete, and on this ground, as well as that of conciseness, the last edition of this work may, with the help of Prof. Sharpey's masterly introduction on general anatomy, take rank with those of France and Germany.

The department of osteology is not that which Prof. Henle has done best. In minute accuracy of detail it is decidedly inferior to Mr. Ward's treatise, which at least equals the best efforts of the French School of Anatomy. And there is a want of attention to broad views of morphology almost as conspicuous as in M. Cruveilhier's work. Thus the comparison between the upper and lower extremities (pp. 226—229) is very insufficient, giving no account of the important and opposing views which have been maintained on this subject, and admitting the demonstrably false position that the radius answers to the fibula, and the ulna with the olecranon to the tibia with the patella. The difficult subject of the homologies of the cranial and facial bones is also entirely omitted, an omission rendered necessary by the absence of any account of their foetal development. The rigid specialisation of human osteology so as to exclude all reference to embryology and comparative anatomy on the one hand, and on the other to the mechanism of the skeleton, makes what ought to be the most interesting part of anatomy the most arid and forbidding. In the last edition of "Quain's Anatomy" we have within a shorter compass a good account of the antecedent development, as well as the mere ossification of the several bones, with illustrative diagrams, and a sufficient account of its homologies to awaken interest in this attractive study. On the other hand, there is nowhere to be found so complete an account of Abnormalities as in Prof. Henle's work, a subject of which the importance is only beginning to be recognised in England. The references to observations in this branch of the subject are very full, and include many only lately published. On this, as on other points, the author has added many fresh facts in the present edition. On the whole, however, it differs but little from the first issue in 1855, and the number of woodcuts remains the same. Among the more important additions may be mentioned one on the differences in the skull of the two sexes (p. 216). No mention is made of the little tympano-hyal bone described by Prof. Flower, and even the ordinary variations of the styloid process, which throw so much light on its homology, are scarcely alluded to.

In conclusion, every anatomist will acknowledge the industry and care with which even small advances in knowledge are added in this edition, but will also hope that nothing may delay the appearance of the volume which is to complete the whole treatise, and no doubt complete it worthily of its distinguished author, and of what he has already published.

H. P.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his Correspondents. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

Science Lectures for the People

OF the justice of your remarks on "Science Lectures for the People" there can be no doubt whatever. The lectures in question are perfect models of what lectures should be, and while reading them I pictured to myself the rich feast that had been prepared for the people who were fortunate enough to hear them—especially for those who had some previous acquaintance with the subjects of which they treat. They are couched in simple language, so that those who run may read. They are strictly to the point, well calculated to excite further inquiry, and in every way adapted for the purpose for which they were intended. It may be, however, doubted, whether lectures on scientific subjects before the general public, however delivered, do that amount of good which they certainly ought to do. A lecture to be thoroughly and lastingly effective presupposes a certain acquaintance with the subject already. To listen even to the most brilliant and never so simply worded address on Spectrum Analysis or Coral Reefs, has a very transient effect, I take it, upon those who have rarely or never heard of such things. However praiseworthy, therefore, every effort to scatter scientific knowledge among our population may be—and it certainly deserves every commendation—my decided opinion, arrived at after large experience with the people in towns and country, especially the latter—is that it will fail, unless we begin with the young. People in masses may be compared with fuel laid in the grate. If you ignite it from the top, a considerable time will elapse before it reaches the whole mass; but if the fire be applied from below, the course is more rapid, and the fuel sooner feels the effect. So with science teaching, or any teaching, we must begin in our schools. Every school, from the primary to the highest, must be opened to its influence. Teachers, I am sure, would welcome the innovation, for it would dispel many a weary hour both for teacher and taught. The everlasting monotony of reading, writing, arithmetic, and scripture, would be enlivened by simple explanations of the human body, plants, &c., and thus children would be taught to take an interest in all matters connected with their future welfare even from their infancy. The same remarks, slightly modified, would apply to many of our middle class and upper schools; for scientific matters, in far too many cases, have still to find a place even here—parents being themselves quite as much, in many instances far more, to blame than the regulations of the school.

It is precisely owing to this want of early training, and consequently to an utter ignorance of the subject, that the lectures on divinity, science, &c., in our universities are of such little real value, and of such little interest to the students. They attend them, it is true, not from any genuine love, but simply because they must attend some for certificates or otherwise. No fault whatever attaches to the lectures themselves; on the contrary, they are of the greatest possible value, and had the students themselves been trained properly and gradatim when at school, the attendance would be vastly increased, a genuine love for the lectures would be engendered, and incalculable results would be the consequence. Or take another instance—our farmers' clubs. With laudable zeal these have been formed all over the kingdom. Lectures on scientific subjects connected with agriculture are delivered from time to time. All very admirable no doubt in its way. The attendance generally is good, but from the vacant stare, the nodding head, and subsequent remarks, nothing can be clearer than that nine-tenths of the lecturer's address on the abstruse niceties of chemical analysis, &c., have been utterly thrown away. What subjects can be more valuable to a farmer than a knowledge of the constituents of the air, the origin of soils, the inner life of plants, the wonderful dependence of animals and plants upon each other, the means of judging artificial manures, &c.; and yet, except among the upper favoured few, utter ignorance of these matters almost universally prevails. It is not from indifference to the subject, far from it, but, as in the former case, from a want of early training in this particular line of thought. The farmer acts just as his father acted before him. He is of all people the most backward in leaving the old routine, and considers such subjects as geology and botany altogether beside the purpose, and a waste of time for his children to learn, though he will praise them in the same breath.