corrected the delineation of part of the coast-line in Prince Regent's Inlet. Altogether the book is full of instruction and healthy entertainment; the map and illustrations add to its value in both respects.

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. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

Antares

IN reference to the apparent change in the angle of the companion to α Scorpii as shown by the recent measures of Mr. Wilson (NATURE, vol. xi. p. 274), an arrangement of the following, which, so far as I am aware, are all the measures that have been made of this beautiful pair since its discovery by Mitchel in 1845, may prove interesting. From a comparison of these earlier results it is evident that no sensible variation has taken place; and it is probable that in the last, either a slight error has been made in reading the position circle, or the observation was taken under too unfavourable conditions to admit of a high degree of accuracy. The details of these measures will be found in the several publications mentioned below.*

1. Mitchel	1846.7	P = 270	D = 2.51
2. Dawes	1848.0	273.2	3.46
3. Bond	1848.3	275.3	3.8
4. Mädler	1849.7	276.2	3.69
5. Powell	1855.7	274.6	—
6. Secchi	1856.4	273.5	3.00
7. Jacob	1857.2	275.1	3.44
8. Wrottesley	1858.3	275.9	3.30
9. Powell	1861.1	271.9	—
10. Dawes	1864.4	275.7	3.67
11. Dembowski	1865.6	270.4	2.99
12. Secchi	1866.0	272.9	2.92
13. Wilson	1873.4	268.7	3.46

Dawes, in connection with his last measures, says, "there is very little, if any, ground for supposing change has occurred in this splendid but difficult object." The difficulty of seeing the small star in this latitude, as in the case of Sirius and its companion, arises not from its closeness or faintness, but from atmospheric causes due to its southern declination. Mitchel called the small star 11.12 magnitude, but Dawes, Secchi, and others rate it at about 8 m., which is more nearly what it appears to be at the present time. With a very steady air I have several times seen it perfectly with a 6-inch Clark refractor contracted to 3½ inch, and on one or two occasions with ¾ inch.

Chicago, March 2

S. W. BURNHAM

Storm Warnings from the United States

ALLUSION has recently been made in NATURE to a proposal for the transmission of weather telegrams from the United States to Europe, as likely to afford valuable data for forecasting the weather on our coasts. Some misconception appears to me to attach to this subject.

Having worked for a considerable time at the comparison of United States with European weather charts and reports, I would express my opinion that the project referred to would be undesirable, on the following grounds:—

1. Only a small proportion of the storms experienced on the American side of the Atlantic can subsequently be distinctly traced in Europe at all.

2. Of those thus traceable, the majority are felt severely only in the extreme north of Europe, and are not productive of serious results on the coasts of Great Britain, France, or Denmark.

* 1. Sidereal Messenger, Sept. 1846.

2. Memoirs of the R.A.S., vol. xxxv.

4. Communicated to Dawes.

5. Memoirs of the R.A.S., vol. xxxii.

6. Memorie dell' Osservatorio del Collegio Romano, 1859.

7. Memoirs of the R.A.S., vol. xxviii.

8. Memoirs of the R.A.S., vol. xxix.

9. Memoirs of the R.A.S., vol. xxxii.

10. Memoirs of the R.A.S., vol. xxxv.

11. Astronomische Nachrichten, 1574.

12. Astronomische Nachrichten, 1614.

3. The rapidity of their progress varies indefinitely, and could not be deduced, *pace* Mr. Draper, from the velocity of the currents experienced in them, even if the latter were not variable also.

4. Many of our most destructive European storms occur when pressures over the Eastern States are tolerably high and steady, and appear to be developed on the Atlantic near the eastern limits of the area of high pressure. In such instances attention to the telegrams would in all probability mislead (at least until the relations of areas of high pressures to those of low pressures be better understood), and thus lead to unfortunate consequences.

For these reasons I believe that the utility of a system of weather telegrams from North America to Europe would be by no means commensurate with the serious expense involved in it.

The connection between the weather periods on this and on the other side of the Atlantic is one of the problems which the progress of research is steadily, though slowly, attacking. But such research can be carried on without embarking on a system of weather telegraphy which is unlikely to be practically beneficial, and the failure of which might rather tend to bring this branch of the science into disrepute.

W. CLEMENT LEY

Ashby Parva, Lutterworth, March 12

Meteorological Observations in the Pacific

IN the leader on "Meteorology—Present and Future" which appeared in NATURE, vol. x. p. 99, it is said: "In order to complete the preliminary meteorological survey of the earth's atmosphere and surface it is indispensable that measures be taken to obtain observations from the less frequented regions of the ocean, from Arctic and Antarctic regions, large portions of British America, South America, Africa, and Polynesia." It is also very correctly observed that "in working out the great question of *local climates* it is absolutely indispensable that uniformity as regards instruments and methods of observation be secured at the different stations."

The meteorology of the Pacific has often occupied my attention, and I have regretted that no systematic effort was made to secure regular observations upon some uniform plan throughout the islands occupied by missionaries. The principal islands in Eastern, Central, and Western Polynesia (as far as the New Hebrides) have gentlemen residing on them, many of whom would (I have good reason to believe) be willing to render assistance in this work. Indeed, many of them are accustomed, already, to make more or less meteorological observations, so far as the reading of the barometer and thermometer goes. But these observations, if collected, would at present be comparatively useless, owing to the want of "uniformity as regards instruments and methods of observation."

Should measures be taken to secure such observations as those suggested in the article above mentioned, and should means be found for supplying (say *lending*, under certain conditions) instruments to those who are willing to become observers, I believe the co-operation of missionaries in most, if not all, of the following islands may be secured, viz., Society Islands, Hervey or Cook's Islands, Niue or Savage Island, Friendly or Tongan Islands, Samoa or Navigators' Islands, Fiji Islands, Loyalty Islands, the New Hebrides, and the south-east peninsula of New Guinea.

I shall be happy to do what I can to bring about such a result. I am willing to correspond with any gentleman representing the "Central Department," or with the secretary of any society which may undertake the work, with regard to details.

Upolu, Samoa, Nov. 16, 1874

S. J. WHITMEE

Struck by Lightning

THE following is offered you for publication in the hope that the facts were observed accurately enough to be of value, and in the belief that reliable accounts of similar experiences are rare.

The house, in which with my family I have spent the winter, stands in the centre of Torbay and close to the sea. In the garden, which gives access to the shore, is a flagstaff (once belonging to the Coast Guard) 50 feet high, with a metal vane at the top, and having the mast steadied at about 25 feet from the ground in the usual way with iron wire guys. About a foot above ground each wire rope terminates in a ½-inch chain which is anchored a few feet in the soil. These chains are much