Ibis and in the Indian journal *Stray Feathers*, will have prepared his readers for an excellent account of the habits of the birds of that island. The avifauna of Ceylon did not attract the attention of the naturalist to any great extent after the year 1854, when Mr. E. L. Layard published his valuable notes in the *Annals of Natural History*, and brought to light a number of new and interesting forms, until in 1872 Mr. E. W. H. Holdsworth presented to the Zoological Society an excellent memoir, embodying not only all that was known on the subject, but adding greatly to our knowledge from the results of his five years' residence in the island. Ornithologists, however, could hardly have expected from the published accounts that so much would remain for Capt. Legge to do in a field often supposed to be tolerably well exhausted by the labours of the two naturalists mentioned above, and it is impossible to speak in too high terms of the volume which our author has now presented to the public, and which, in our opinion, is one of the best ornithological works ever yet produced. Not only does Capt. Legge excel in his descriptions of the habits of the Ceylonese birds, which he has himself studied in the jungle during his seven years residence in Ceylon, devoting his whole leisure time to the pursuit of ornithology, but on the return of his regiment to England he at once sets to work to complete the scientific history of the birds with whose life-history he is already so well acquainted. The result of the patient labour which he has devoted to both branches of the subject is apparent on every page, and from the peculiar relations of the avifauna of Ceylon this task has been by no means an easy one. Possessing only a limited number of peculiar forms, the birds of Ceylon indicate affinities on the one hand to those of Southern India, and on the other to those of the Malayan Peninsula, while in the higher ranges a decided Himalayan element crops up. Sometimes the differences between the forms of birds inhabiting these regions and Ceylon are found to be of specific importance, but more often the variation does not extend beyond the recognition of a climatic race or sub-species. Not one of these difficult questions is shirked by the author, who diligently compares the subject of every article with the allied forms of surrounding countries, so that many of his descriptions amount to monographic revisions of genera and species of the highest importance to the student of Indian ornithology.

Commenced originally with the idea of providing a handbook to the birds of Ceylon, for the use of the numerous planters and civil servants interested in the study of birds (and Capt. Legge's work shows that these are already a goodly company), this production not only fulfils the author's original purpose, but forms a most valuable addition to the series of similar works, such as Buller's "Birds of New Zealand," Dresser's "Birds of Europe," &c. We regret to see that the great length of the articles, which the conscientious researches of the author have obliged him to write, has already forced him to give to the one part now published no less than 340 pages, which was as much as the entire book was expected to occupy. Involving as this does a serious pecuniary loss, we feel bound to call attention to the fact, as evidencing the self-sacrificing enthusiasm with which Capt. Legge regards his subject, and when we state that the coloured plates, which give illustrations of every peculiar Ceylonese species, are in Mr. Keuleman's very best style, we can add nothing more to recommend the work to the attention of the scientific public.

R. BOWDLER SHARPE

Sur la Structure et les Modes de Fécondation des Fleurs.
Par L. Errera et G. Gevaert. 1^{re} partie. (Bruxelles, Mayolez, 1879.)

IF the value of a work is to be judged by the extent of the original research to which it has given birth, then surely few have been published possessing so high a value as those of Mr. Darwin. The little volume before us is a

direct outcome of attention directed by Darwin's writings to the subject of the fertilisation of flowers. Without pretending to any novel discovery, it gives a clear and succinct *résumé* of our present state of knowledge of the subject, the writers themselves confirming Darwin's observations on some important points. Appended is an interesting morphological study and comparison of two species of *Pentstemon*, *P. hartwegi* and *gentianoides*, of which the authors consider the latter to be a derivative from the former. They regard the natural order Scrophulariaceæ as being the offspring of certain forms belonging to the Solanaceæ.

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.]

[The Editor urgently requests correspondents to keep their letters as short as possible. The pressure on his space is so great that it is impossible otherwise to ensure the appearance even of communications containing interesting and novel facts.]

Deltaic Growth

THERE can be no doubt that there are conditions very favourable to the rapid deposition of sediment brought down by the Irrawaddy, Sittang, and Salween rivers, in the Gulf of Martaban—as a reference to the map will show—but the amount can hardly be as great as that afforded by the following results, which, I anticipate, may be of some interest to your readers.

While proceeding northwards towards Rangoon from Penang, in the s.s. *Fitzpatrick*, Commander Humphries, I observed, shortly after we entered, discoloured or muddy water in the open sea, lat. 15° 15' N.; the soundings taken were only from fifteen to sixteen fathoms in places where the Admiralty charts showed from thirty-two to thirty-four fathoms, just *double*, or a difference of 100 feet.

The chart was based on surveys originally made by Captains Ross and Crawford, probably thirty years back, and lately issued in an amended form, supposed to have been "corrected to date."

PAT. DOYLE

Jordan's Hotel, Rangoon, February 27

Atmospheric Pressure

DANS le No. de la NATURE de 6 courant, p. 420, à propos d'une appréciation des observations météorologiques de l'*Hydrographic Office* à Pola, on lit le suivant :—

"The amount of this third maximum is very small, and the evidence yet adduced is not sufficient to determine whether it is a real increase of atmospheric pressure or merely an apparent increase due to undetected instrumental errors."

Nous avons remarqué ce maximum secondaire du baromètre dans une recherche sur les variations diurnes de la pression à Lisbonne, avant de savoir que M. Ricatscheff avait fait une mémoire sur ce sujet, et nous pouvons affirmer que le dit maximum n'est dû à des erreurs de l'instrument :—

La recherche que nous avons fait a été dans une série de 12 années d'observations horaires, déduites du barographe (système photographique) et nous avons constaté le suivant :

1. Pas une seule des 12 courbes de la pression atmosphérique, correspondantes aux 12 mois de décembre ou aux 12 mois de janvier, a laissé d'exhiber le dit maximum secondaire entre les 13 et 15 heures.

2. Les valeurs des erreurs probables des pressions moyennes dans les heures (13, 14, 15) sont encore inférieures aux erreurs probables des autres heures du jour.

3. En groupant les pressions horaires des jours sereins et calmes des mois de janvier et de décembre, pendant toute la série de 12 années, le maximum en question est ressorti plus régulier et beaucoup plus développé que dans les courbes des pressions moyennes de les mêmes mois. Il me semble donc démontré l'existence de ce maximum secondaire, très difficile à expliquer, et que rendra plus obscure l'explication de la double oscillation diurne du baromètre.

JOAO CAPELLO

Observatorio do Infante D. Luiz, Lisbonne, 14 mars