

more easy of reference to the reader, than when relegated to plates at the end of a memoir.

Fashion in Deformity, as Illustrated in the Customs of Barbarous and Civilised Races. By William Henry Flower, LL.D., F.R.S., F.R.C.S., &c. With Illustrations. 8vo, pp. 85. (London: Macmillan and Co.)

IF Prof. Flower by this little work has not rendered good service to medicine, and tended greatly to prevent the diseases due to the prevalence of absurd fashions, it is certainly not his fault. He discusses the curious fashion which has prevailed among all nations, of inflicting upon themselves serious pain and inconvenience, as well as rendering themselves abominably ugly, in their endeavours to conform to a false standard of beauty. He begins with the epidermal appendages—nails, hair, teeth, and skin, proceeding to alterations in the bony skeleton. After discussing the modes of dressing the hair, the first figure he gives is that of the hand of a Chinese ascetic, in which the finger nails appear to be nearly a foot long, and twisted almost like the tendrils of a vine. The custom of tattooing perhaps inflicts upon the votary of fashion more pain than almost any other. The process varies from making gashes with sharp stones, and rubbing wood-ashes into them, to pricking delicate patterns into the skin by pieces of shell cut into a number of fine points, or by a bundle of sharp needles, and then rubbing colouring-matter into the punctures. The custom of wearing rings and plugs in the lips, nose, and ears is sometimes carried to a most exaggerated extent, one man, in an island near New Guinea, having such holes in his ears, that the lobes were converted into great pendants of skin, through which he could easily pass his arms. Such deformities of fashion, although most disagreeable to our ideas, are of much less importance than those which affect the bony skeleton. The author gives a full description of the various modes of altering the shape of the head adopted by various tribes, and of deforming the foot amongst the Chinese. But from savage tribes, Mr. Flower passes on to deformity in fashion amongst ourselves. He shows, by drawings of deformed English feet, and of the modern Parisian shoe, that, much as we may ridicule the Chinese, we are very little better than they. In one particular, indeed, we may be said to be very much worse than either Chinese or savages; for, while they deform the foot, we deform that part of the body which contains our vital organs. How far removed from nature is the form imparted to the figure by fashion, is seen by comparing the figures of the Venus of Milo, and of a lady dressed in the fashion of 1880.

We fear that no amount of warning regarding the pain, suffering, and danger to life which such fashions entail, will ever prevent them from being followed; but it is possible that when fashionable people come to see that their absurdities reduce them to the same level of taste as a Botocudo Indian or Bongo Negro, they may be induced to seek after a higher standard, which shall at once be beautiful, and true to nature.

Cameos from the Silver-Land; or, The Experiences of a Young Naturalist in the Argentine Republic. By E. W. White. In two Volumes. Vol. I. (London: John Van Voorst, 1881.)

THIS is the first volume of an interesting work which would appear to give a true and vivid sketch of the great Argentine Republic as it is at the present day. The great Republic seems, by the test of the London Exchange, to be well holding its own, but the notions current in England about it are often absurd in the extreme. Mr. White has in this volume given us a very good guide-book to the province, detailing the chief peculiarities of its climate, giving an account of its various races, of the state of the education of the people in the province, and of its natural resources. Buenos Ayres is described in a very

enthusiastic way, and the behaviour of its inhabitants is spoken of in glowing terms. The first few chapters are devoted to the experiences of our young naturalist in the large cities. When he left these for trips to Cordoba and such like distant places his experiences as a naturalist began, and we follow such wanderings with real pleasure. At one time he journeyed to Cosquin to hunt the Condor; again to Mendoza for the Guanaco; but wherever he went he was sure to observe and record some interesting incident about the flowers and birds and insects that he met with.

Select Extra Tropical Plants Readily Eligible for Industrial Culture or Naturalisation, with some Indications of their Native Countries and some of their Uses. By Ferdinand, Baron von Mueller, K.C.M.G., M.D., F.R.S. New South Wales Edition, enlarged. (Sydney: Government Printers, 1881.)

IT would be difficult to convey an accurate idea of the large amount of information which the author has brought together within the compass of the 400 pages forming this volume, an edition of which was some years ago published by the Victoria Acclimatisation Society, and also not long since in Calcutta by the Central Government of India. While the present edition does not put in a claim for completeness, either as a specific index or as a series of notes on the respective technologic applicability of the plants enumerated, still, we have here brought together an immense assemblage of useful plants arranged in alphabetical order, but with a systematic index and also their correct scientific names, and the chief facts of interest that concern each as to its uses to mankind. Some of these plants, all of which are presumed to be capable of cultivation in extra-tropical countries, are good for food, either as yielding pot-herbage, or roots, or fruits. Others are useful for dyes, for their fibre, as fodder-plants, as medicinal plants, or as timber-trees. The information in all cases is given in the fewest possible words. Baron von Mueller is to be congratulated on the honourable part he has taken now for many years in enriching the culture-resources of his adopted country, and we echo his hope that this most valuable manual of useful plants may be placed in the leading library of every State-school in the Australian colonies, when it will be sure to aid in educating the youth instructed therein, in a special knowledge that may be of immense service in the future of Australasia.

E. P. W.

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.]

Vignettes from Nature

IF Mr. Grant Allen does not mean what he says, I should strongly recommend him, alike for his readers' sake and his own, to say what he means.

When he wrote, "As a matter of fact, it seems probable that our actual fauna and flora are on the whole not only quite as big as any previous ones, but even a great deal bigger," and went on to cite the "modern" whales, the "living" forty-foot shark, and the elephants of the "recent period" (which not I, but his friendly reviewer, Mr. Wallace, converted into the "present time"), I naturally understood him to mean that the "actual," "modern," or "living" forms of these types are larger than any corresponding "extinct" forms of the same. It now appears, however, that he meant to include *extinct* whales, *extinct* sharks, and the *extinct* mammoth (with, of course, its contemporaries) as members of the "actual" fauna.

To me it seems far better that science should not be taught to