

*Our Island-Continent: a Naturalist's Holiday in Australia.* By Dr. J. E. Taylor, F.L.S. With Map. (London: S.P.C.K., 1886.)

DR. TAYLOR took a trip to Australia for his health, during which he visited South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales. He has of course scarcely anything new to tell us, though his little book is pleasant reading, and many features of the island-continent are brought out that would only strike a naturalist. Why does Dr. Taylor not state the year of his visit?

*The Handy Guide to Norway.* By Thomas B. Willson, M.A. (London: Stanford, 1886.)

THIS is a business-like and compact guide which can easily be put into the tourist's pocket, though its price is rather surprising. This is probably due to the fact that it contains many sectional maps, an exceedingly useful feature to the intelligent traveller. The appendix on the Flora and Lepidoptera of Norway, by Dr. R. C. R. Jordan, will prove serviceable to the tourist interested in natural history.

*Mountain Ascents in Westmoreland and Cumberland.* By John Barrow, F.R.S. (London: Sampson Low and Co., 1886.)

MR. BARROW is an experienced Alpinist, but has a genuine appreciation of the gentler heights of his native land. He has ascended nearly every peak of any consequence in the Lake region, and this volume describes simply and clearly how he did it. The book will be useful as a guide to any who wish to follow Mr. Barrow's example; while the notes on the botany of the district render it of some scientific interest.

*An Account of a West Indian Sanatorium, and a Guide to Barbados.* By the Rev. J. H. Sutton Moxly. (London: Sampson Low and Co., 1886.)

THIS is a special plea for Barbados as a health resort, and Mr. Moxly adduces many facts in support of his position. The climate is superb, and the great drawback is want of drainage, giving rise to epidemics of typhoid fever. The book is well worth perusal by those in search of a winter-summer. The book will be useful as a guide, though we regret to note the absence of any map.

#### 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 insure the appearance even of communications containing interesting and novel facts.]

#### Fishermen's Foul Water

PERMIT me to call attention to the fact that the small gelatinous masses that annually, about this time, cause the sea-water to become what fishermen call "foul," are now in great abundance on this coast. Their recurrence this year being somewhat later than usual is doubtless owing to the low temperature of May.

On viewing a sample of the water in a glass vessel, the spherical and pyriform masses giving a brownish tinge are readily seen; and a pocket lens makes evident the presence of large specimens of the diatom *Eucampia britannica* that are seen as perfect spirals, some of which have four or five complete turns, and also some filamentous rods. Microscopic examination of the sediment deposited in the course of a few hours enables one to see *Rhizosolenia*, *Asterionella*, and several other diatoms whose names are not known to me.

Respecting the gelatinous bodies, I may remark that they are studded with granules that appear to be nucleated.

In one of these masses that I have had under observation

to-day there has been a gradual segregation of the embedded germs, and this evening these exhibit individual movements which I think indicate the existence of cilia, although with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch objective and C eye-piece (the highest power at hand) I cannot distinguish the cilia themselves.

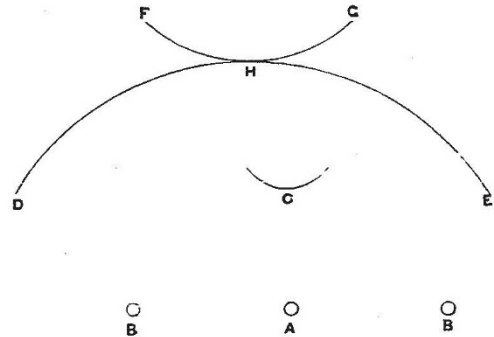
It will be interesting to know how far round our shores at the present time these organisms extend, and I hope, by thus again directing attention to them, that some one more competent than myself will be led to investigate their life-history.

Sheerness

W. H. SHRUBSOLE

#### Solar Halo

AT 6 p.m. this evening I observed an unusual halo and mock suns, a diagram of which is annexed.



A, the sun; B, B, mock suns; C, portion of halo, convex side towards sun; D E, portion of halo, concave side towards sun; F G, portion of halo touching D E at H. Distance—A to B,  $22^\circ$ ; A to C,  $22^\circ$ ; A to H,  $44^\circ$ .

The sky after having been overcast for the largest portion of the day was at this time fairly clear; very little lower cloud, but a good deal of cirrus. The measurements were observed with a sextant, and were exactly as given, reading the even degree in both cases.

T. H. TIZARD

H.M.S. *Triton*, Great Yarmouth, June 21

#### Ampère's Rule

IN reviewing Mr. L. Cumming's "Electricity Treated Experimentally," "J. T. B." (NATURE, May 27, p. 74) humorously points out how easily students may get confused in trying to make use of "Ampère's rule." There is another rule, published by Pfändler if I am not mistaken, which is in so far much simpler, as it does not compel the imagination to fancy movements and actions of the human body which it in reality never could perform:—

"Follow the direction of the current in moving the right hand along the wire, but holding it so that the stretched fingers are parallel to the wire and the palm is turned towards the north pole of the magnet. The outstretched thumb then gives the direction in which the north pole will be deflected."

Dresden-Striesen, June 12

G. DAEHNE

#### THE A.O.U. CODE AND CHECK-LIST OF AMERICAN BIRDS

SOME few years since the British Ornithologists' Union appointed a Committee to draw up and publish an authoritative list of the birds of the British Islands. This Committee consisted of the following English ornithologists:—P. L. Sclater (Chairman), Osbert Salvin, F. Du Cane Godman, Henry Seebohm, Howard Saunders, H. E. Dresser, R. Bowdler Sharpe, and H. T. Wharton (Secretary). The Committee held seventy-one meetings, and ultimately a list of British birds was published under the title "A List of British Birds, compiled by a Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union."

Notwithstanding the adverse criticism which has been passed on this little book by a few ornithologists, there can be no doubt that it has supplied a want, and that the high scientific position of many of the members of the Committee invested the publication with a degree of