

nothing to tell us about the system of government, or the relations between the king and his nobles, the people and the serfs, in Corea. On the other hand, he gives a full and sometimes a very vivid account of everything he himself had opportunities of directly and carefully studying, and his book is worthy of serious attention, mainly because it consists of the results of his own personal observation. Mr. Carles went to Corea for the first time in 1883, when he not only visited the capital, Soul, but undertook, with some friends, an interesting journey inland. The object of this excursion was the inspection of a silver working, which proved to be very unworthy of its reputation. The scenery, Mr. Carles says, never failed to charm, and the people were invariably civil. At Soul he had some difficulty in obtaining anything really characteristic of native taste and skill. In the curio shops the only distinctly native article seemed to be a kind of iron casket inlaid with silver, the pattern of which was sometimes very delicate. In the spring of 1884, Mr. Carles took up his quarters at Chemulpo as H.M. Vice-Consul in Corea; and one of the best chapters in the book is that in which he sums up his impressions of Chemulpo and the neighbourhood, bringing together various facts of scientific interest, and indicating problems as to tidal and other phenomena about which he is still uncertain. In this chapter Mr. Carles offers a suggestion which is certainly worthy of the attention of men of science. He says:—

“With so much of interest on all sides, I could not help regretting that no information was ever asked for by the outside world on points which the opening of Corea would be likely to clear up. It seemed impossible that one could not be of use to some science in collecting facts which had hitherto been unattainable; but apparently consular officers are not consulted except on commercial questions. If scientific men would follow the example set by Chambers of Commerce, and ask for information which they expect to be within the reach of out-of-the-way posts, they would generally confer a boon on the officer by giving him a new special interest, and they might sometimes learn what they sought for.”

Early in September 1884, Mr. Carles received instructions to undertake a journey along the high road from Soul to China, as far as the frontier town of Wi-ju; then from Wi-ju eastwards across the mountains to Kong-ge; thence south to Gensan, on the east coast; and from Gensan to Soul. In the course of this journey he watched closely for any indication of conditions favourable to industry and trade, but his observation did not lead him to take a sanguine view of the immediate future of the Coreans. Displaying little enterprise, they are extremely poor, and the prevailing opinion among them seems to be that the Government alone is capable of doing anything for the improvement of their circumstances. At Song-do, the old capital, admirable pottery used to be made, but when the seat of the government was transferred to Soul, the trade fell off, “and the workmen, refusing to follow the Court, gradually abandoned their industry, the knowledge of which has now been forgotten.” Speaking of the religion of the Coreans, Mr. Carles says that, although Buddhism has been under a ban during the supremacy of the present dynasty, there is hardly a mountain valley off the main roads in which there is not a Buddhist temple; and often he came across figures of Buddha carved in relief on rocks. Fetichism still survives, and is manifested, among other ways, in the presentation of offerings to particularly fine trees. Mr. Carles gives an account of a conspiracy which caused serious trouble at Soul in 1884; and in a concluding chapter there are some careful notes on the Korean language. The interest of the book is greatly increased by the illustrations, which are mostly reproductions of some paintings in sepia by a Corean artist at Gensan.

Navigation and Nautical Astronomy. Compiled by Staff-Commander W. R. Martin, R.N. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888.)

THIS book, which has been accepted by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty as a text-book for the Royal Navy, is one that has been wanted for some time, as it contains the whole theory and practice of nautical astronomy in one part. The method of arranging the various problems is very good. The theory of a problem is always proved first, then the problem is worked in a theoretical manner, and lastly in the manner used by navigators, so that one gets everything to do with any one problem in two or three pages, whereas most books on this subject are divided into two parts, a theoretical and a practical. The method adopted by Staff-Commander Martin ought to prove a great advantage to all persons using his book, more especially beginners. The work is divided into two parts, the first being devoted to the various methods of fixing ships' positions by the land, and of navigating a ship by what is known as “dead reckoning.” In this part also the various methods of chart construction are very fully explained, and it ought to be mentioned, for the information of naval officers, that the examples relating to charts are as much as possible arranged to be used with the “Officers' Atlas,” which is supplied to each man-of-war. The examples ought therefore to be of great service to junior officers. The second part treats of the theory and practice of nautical astronomy; the method of arrangement we have already described. The volume is accompanied by the requisite charts and diagrams.

H. C. L.

A. Johnston's Botanical Plates. (Edinburgh: A. Johnston, 1888.)

THESE are coloured plates, 35 × 25 inches in size, intended for use in elementary schools. In the first instalment of nine plates, members of the following natural orders are shown: Ranunculaceæ, Papaveraceæ, Linaceæ, Acerineæ, Solanaceæ (two examples), Scrophulariaceæ, Corylaceæ, and Liliaceæ. The plants already illustrated appear to have been chosen at random, but when the series is completed a fair representation of the more important orders will no doubt be provided. The plates are well executed and boldly coloured, so that the chief external characters of the plants shown will be sufficiently obvious to the class. Some details of the structure of the flower have also been given, but these figures are rather meagre. Still, this is not a serious objection, as the chief aim of botanical teaching in elementary schools must always be to teach children to know plants by sight. For this purpose these plates, judging from the few already published, seem admirably adapted.

D. H. S.

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 intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

Injuries caused by Lightning in Africa.

IN a copy of NATURE published on December 11, 1884 (vol. xxxi. p. 127), I noticed a statement by Herr von Danckelman that in all the publications relating to Africa, accounts of injuries caused by lightning are so rare that he scarcely found any literature concerning the use of lightning conductors or the frequency of accidents caused by lightning in the tropics. After an unbroken residence of twelve years in the Egyptian Equatorial Province, I can give to your meteorological readers a little information on the subject in question, and I venture to submit