

Besides the rarity of some of these plants, they have a habit of entirely disappearing after flowering, and indeed in many cases they will only appear at irregular and long intervals, which also conspires to make them difficult to procure, so that collectors are necessarily anxious to know the time of the year at which they should be looked for in flower, and this the author has where possible added to his description.

The volume includes, besides the typical Amaryllideæ, the Alstrœmeriæ and Agaveæ, but the Hypoxideæ and Velloziæ are omitted on the grounds that they have been elsewhere fully dealt with. This we think a pity, as it would have made the work more complete to have included these groups; but this will hardly affect cultivators, with whom the Hypoxids are rarely found favourites on account of their comparatively insignificant flowers and general similarity, while the Vellozias, though they would be welcome additions to our stoves on account of their beautiful flowers, yet baffle our gardeners on account of their bulkiness and slow growth.

In the Agaveæ it will be noticed that of many species (in fact, nearly one-third) only the foliage is known. For garden purposes perhaps the form and number of the leaves may be sufficient, at least for identification; but it cannot be considered satisfactory to publish as new species, and endow with scientific names, plants of which the inflorescence is unknown. The author, however, has but done his duty in incorporating these species into his work.

One may hope that the publication of this compendium will stimulate our amateur gardeners to turn their attention more carefully to this comparatively neglected group. Already for some time signs have not been wanting to show that they are rising into favour again to some extent. The Narcissi, Hippeastrums, and Crinums are undergoing elaborate cultivation and hybridization by the best of our gardeners with the highest success, and if this hand-book contributes to the study of this group it will have done its work.

H. N. R.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF.

*Another World; or, The Fourth Dimension.* By A. T. Schofield, M.D. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1888.)

THIS work consists of seven chapters. The first four—the land of no dimensions, the land of one dimension, the land of two dimensions, and the land of three dimensions—consist of large extracts from “Flatland,” with a running commentary upon them, bringing out their salient facts. Indeed, had not “Flatland” been published, the author admits his own book would not have been written. In Chapter V., the land of four dimensions is mathematically considered, and here we have stated, from analogy; the relations of a being in one dimension with that above him and its inhabitants, e.g. one in the third dimension (our world) with the fourth; and in Chapter VI. the land of four dimensions is considered in relation to ours of three. Chapter VII. considers generally the land of four dimensions, with facts and analogies. The fourth dimension is not discussed on the lines of Mr. Hinton’s “What is the Fourth Dimension?” but after the mathematical side of the question has been considered, our author “further considers the actual facts around us bearing on the question, and compares the deduced laws of the fourth dimension with some of the claims of Christianity as stated in the Bible.” Here we must close our notice—as we cannot go into an examination of these

topics in our columns—with saying that there is much of interest in the pages before us, and for some readers the speculations of the later chapters may have as much interest as the mathematical certainties of the earlier chapters have for others.

*Euclid's Method, or the Proper Way to Treat on Geometry.* By A. H. Blunt. (Shepshed: Freeman, 1888.)

THIS booklet consists of an introduction (pp. 3-10), and the method of treating on geometry (pp. 10-23). We let the writer speak for himself:—“In this small work I have attempted to show the proper way to treat on geometry, and which I conceive was the method of Euclid; for it will be seen that the results are right from the way in which they are arrived at, and that they agree with Euclid’s results. It is certain, I think none will deny, that when Euclid composed his ‘Geometry,’ he did everything in it under the guidance of reason and knowledge of what the true method consists in; but since he has not expressed or shown those reasons (and it would not have been proper, nor would it have been necessary to have done so in his ‘Geometry’), they therefore appear to have been known but very little to anyone else since his time, as is evident from the expressions and unjust fault-finding made against him in the writings of modern geometers, which greatly betray their own ignorance of the true method. So long as the true method remains unknown, it is not to be wondered at that men should busy themselves in finding faults with Euclid, his work being so complete and perfect as to leave them but little else to do. Not that I would be understood to mean that his works ought to be accepted in blind submission as everything perfect, or that no faults, if there are any in it, ought to be pointed out”; and so on. *Ex pede Herculem!* The author’s remarks are made sincerely, and for a certain order of mind his explanations are likely to clear up many points in the Definitions. It is to these only that he confines his attention in pp. 10-23, and he gives good reasons why Euclid should have taken them in the order he has taken them. This was his object: write, then, Q.E.D., and *Vivat Euclides!*

*On the Distribution of Rain over the British Isles during the year 1887.* Compiled by G. J. Symons, F.R.S. (London: Edward Stanford, 1888.)

MR. SYMONS’S “British Rainfall” is so well known that we need only say of the present issue that it is in no respect inferior to the preceding volumes of the series. The marked characteristic of 1887 was the prevalence of droughts. According to Mr. Symons, the year has had no equal for widespread deficiency of rainfall since 1788. Naturally, therefore, much space is devoted in this volume to the subject of droughts; and in one chapter—on “Historic Droughts”—he has brought together, from a variety of sources, a large amount of information that ought to be as interesting to historians as to meteorologists. In the preface Mr. Symons calls special attention to important additions which have been made to our knowledge of the rainfall of the Lake District. These have resulted from a grant of £42 7s. made by the Royal Society from its own funds in 1886.

#### 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.]

The “Tamaron” of the Philippine Islands.

A LETTER, which I have just received from our Corresponding Member, the energetic traveller and naturalist, Prof. J. B. Steere,