

accurate on the whole : so faithful is it that Mr. Somerville has omitted to correct Hartig's own mistake as to the generic name of the teak, which reappears in the English edition as *Tectonia*—surely the translator knows it should be *Tectona*!

The chief defects in the original pamphlet may be summed up in that characters are relied on for distinguishing closely allied woods which do not serve the purpose. For instance, the broad medullary rays, so called, of the alder are a very treacherous guide ; and the admission that the wood of *Esculus* "occupies a position midway between" the hard and soft woods, itself shows how useless the property of hardness is, as a class character, unless defined in a rigid manner.

Both the selection and the description of the seven exotic timbers mentioned in the appendix are faulty, and we are driven to the conclusion that there is room for a much better book on the subject than the little pioneer under review. As a pioneer, however, it is to be welcomed, with its useful, compact information, as well as its failings.

Advanced Physiography (Physiographic Astronomy). By John Mills. (London : Chapman and Hall, 1890.)

THE introductory part of this book is a reprint of the elementary lessons in the subject by the same author (*NATURE*, vol. xlii. p. 76), and the remainder is intended to meet the requirements of advanced students in connection with the Science and Art examinations. The new material constitutes a fair general outline of the subject, but some of the descriptions suffer from want of detail. There are also indications of the author's unfamiliarity with some parts of the subject. On p. 248, for example, it is evident that the author is not well acquainted with stellar nomenclature, as he does not seem to be aware that Roman capitals are reserved for recently discovered variable stars. Again, on p. 253, he gives some figures relating to variable stars, which he evidently does not understand ; he forgets to point out that Dunér's observations of stars were all of one spectroscopic group, and that the numbers given show that the maximum of variability occurs in that particular group. It should be an author's duty to use no term which he has not explained, but on page 114 he refers to the moon's mean horizontal parallax, although the meaning is not even hinted at.

The excellent plan of writing a head-line over each important paragraph has been adopted, but has not been employed consistently throughout. Thus, under the heading "To weigh a planet having a satellite," we find also a reference to the determination of the masses of the moon and the satellites of Jupiter and Saturn ; and again, the chapter headed "Celestial Photography" consists largely of terrestrial magnetism.

The illustrations are numerous, but of varying quality ; it is difficult to imagine what kind of telescope would give such a view of the moon as that represented in Fig. 93.

Travels in Africa. By Dr. Wilhelm Junker. Translated from the German by A. H. Keane, F.R.G.S. (London : Chapman and Hall, 1890.)

THE work of which this is a translation records Dr. Junker's experiences as a geographical explorer from the year 1875 to 1878. Besides an excursion to the Siwa Oasis and Natron Valley, it includes "a careful survey of the Báranka watercourse, wanderings through Upper Nubia, an expedition to the Sobat River, and numerous journeys throughout Makaraka Land and surrounding regions." It is to his later work that Dr. Junker chiefly owes his fame as an explorer ; but in the present volume he gives an account of many notable achievements, and, as the translator points out, his descriptions of Makaraka Land and neighbouring districts will supply cartographers with plentiful material for filling up their

blank spaces in an extensive region. Dr. Junker is a good writer as well as a bold and scientific traveller, and no one who begins to read his narrative will find it hard to go on to the end. The translator has done his work carefully, and the interest of the story is much increased by a valuable map and many good illustrations.

Selected Subjects in connection with the Surgery of Infancy and Childhood. By Edmund Owen, M.B., F.R.C.S. (London : Baillière, Tindall, and Cox, 1890.)

IN this volume Dr. Owen has published (by request) the Lettsomian Lectures delivered by him at the Medical Society of London in the present year. The position of Lettsomian Lecturer has been held by so many illustrious members of the profession that he seems to have undertaken with diffidence the task entrusted to him. The subjects with which he decided to deal have of late, as he says, been attracting considerable attention ; and no one can doubt that they are of great practical importance. Dr. Owen discourses on them not only with learning, but with the directness, clearness, and force that spring from careful and long-continued observation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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The Correspondence on Russian Transliteration.

AS absence from England prevented our replying at the time to the last letters on the system of Russian transliteration proposed in *NATURE* (vol. xli. p. 397), we thought it best to delay reply till any further communications from foreign correspondents had arrived. Since our last note (*NATURE*, vol. xli. p. 535) four letters have been received :—

(1) Mr. Wilkins (*NATURE*, May 22, p. 77) writes from Tashkend to point out that the system fails to distinguish between the few Russian words which differ only in their final semi-vowel. This is quite correct, but could only be avoided by the adoption of a separate symbol for each of these two characters and their retention at the ends of words. The addition to the trouble of printing that this would involve would be far more serious than the chance of error : *krób*, a roof, is hardly more likely to be confused with *krób*, blood, than, in a quite analogous case, is the German *band*, a volume, with *band*, a ribbon.

We do not accept Mr. Wilkins's criticism that *ui* does not "even remotely" represent the sound of *и*. In the use of the letter in such a word as *Полный* we fully admit that this is so ; but in other cases, as after a labial, it seems to us to represent the sound fairly well. Phonetically, *Pribuïlov* (to take Mr. Wilkins's own case) is not so exact as *Prībūlōff*, as the word would probably be rendered by the elaborate refinements of the "Historical English Dictionary" ; but even this is inadequate. We despair of any correct phonetic rendering of Russian words in English characters till a system is arranged on the lines of Dr. Murray's ; and then the word would appear in some such guise as *Prībūlōffl̄k̄*. *Ui* seems to us on the average, and certainly in the case chosen by Mr. Wilkins, a better phonetic equivalent than *y*—a letter which is unfairly overworked in nearly all systems of transliterations, and which we have reserved exclusively for the double symbols *ya, ye, yu*.

(2) Mr. Wilkins, and our second critic, Baron Osten-Sacken (*NATURE*, May 22, p. 77), agree in condemning the adoption of *zh* for *ж*. A strong case can no doubt be made out for the claim of *j* to represent that letter, and *zh* was accepted (largely on phonetic grounds) as one of those mutual concessions which Baron Osten-Sacken commends. *Zh* has been largely used—almost universally in America—and it represents the sound better than the English *j*. No doubt the French *j* of *jour* is as near to it as the *zh* sound in the word *az(h)ure*. As the system proposed was intended for English-speaking countries we thought it inadvisable to adopt a French sound for one letter. The system is not so ambitious as Baron Osten-Sacken suggests it