crystalloids, as they are termed, filter easily when in solution. Glue-like substances, or colloids, as they are termed, filter with difficulty." Statements like these are calculated to mislead a student as to the differences between simple filtration and dialysis.

On the whole the book gives a large amount of information in a very small compass, and this is, speaking generally, accurate. One of the best features is the wealth of illustration, selected from well-known text-books, which it possesses. J. S. EDKINS.

OUR BOOK SHELF.

Light: an Elementary Text-book, Theoretical and Practical, for Colleges and Schools. By R. T. Glazebrook, M.A., F.R.S. (Cambridge: University Press, 1894.)

THE best foundation upon which a student of science can build is elementary physics, for the necessity of accurate observation and correct reasoning is impressed upon him from the very beginning. Mere book-work has no value in training the mind in this direction: lectures illustrated with experiments may lead to the desired end if the teacher take care that the inferences to be drawn from the experimentation are quite clear; but best of all methods, by far, is to let the student perform the experiments himself, to mark the result, and then reason out the explanation. The advantages to be derived from such practical work are incalculable, yet the small number of physical laboratories in our schools and colleges at the present time shows that its importance has not been fully recognised. There are, however, signs of improvement. Judging from the increasing number of books dealing more or less with practical physics, interest in that subject is developing. Mr. Glazebrook's two volumes, that on "Heat," recently noticed in these columns, and the one now before us, help to extend the practical method of teaching. Believing with most scientific educationalists that courses of practical instruction are necessary to the proper understanding of fundamental principles, Mr. Glazebrook gives, in the volume under review, clear descriptions of experiments, the explanations of the theory underlying the work, and the deductions to be made from the results. The theoretical portion of the book could very well form the subject of short lectures preceding the laboratory work, in which the principles expounded at such times could be experimentally tested. The book abounds with diagrams of the kind that appertain to treatises on light. To the artistic mind these figures lack beauty, but they possess the qualification of clearness; and that is sufficient to commend them to the student of optics. Teachers who require a book on light, suitable for the class-room and the laboratory, would do well to adopt Mr. Glazebrook's work.

Beni Hasan. Part ii. By P. E. Newberry. With appendix, plans, and measurements of the Tombs, by G. W. Fraser. (London: Kegan Paul, 1893.)

SOME two or three months ago we called the attention of readers of NATURE to the first part of Mr. Newberry's work on the rock-hewn XIIth dynasty tombs at Beni Hasan in Upper Egypt, and we have now the pleasure to record the appearance of the second and concluding portion of this valuable book. We have already described the general scope of the publication, and the plan upon which it has been carried out, and it therefore only remains for us to state the contents of the part before us. Employing the same method of arrangement, Mr. Newberry describes tombs Nos. 15-39, and he gives lists of all the members of the households of the Egyptian noblemen who were buried at Beni Hasan; the general remarks which he makes upon them are interesting and to the point. Too much praise cannot be given to the thirty-seven plates which illustrate the text, for they give the reader an accurate idea of the general appearance of the scenes painted upon the walls of the tombs. Mr. G. W. Fraser's "Report" (pp. 71-85) is also a very useful addition to the book, and the copies of Greek and Coptic *graffiti* on pp. 65-68 will be welcome for several reasons. We are glad to see that the system of transliteration of Egyptian texts has been much modified, especially as the non-expert will now be able to gain some idea of its meaning and use. It is a great pity, however, that the system as represented in Dr. Birch's "Egyptian Texts" was not wholly adopted.

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.*]

Great Auk's Egg.

IN your last issue (p. 412), I observe a letter from Prof. Newton, in which he gives his version of the history of the egg of this extinct bird, which was recently sold by auction for £315. There is no doubt that the egg was brought to this country by Yarrell, who purchased it in France some time before 1838, in which year it was figured by Hewitson in his well-known work on birds' eggs. But the question is, whereabouts in France did he find it? Prof. Newton, who well remembers it in the collection of Yarrell, says: "He told me, as he told others of his friends, that he bought it *in Paris*, in a little curiosity shop of mean appearance," and that he paid two francs for it. He adds that the only "variant" of this story deserving of consideration, is to the effect that the price was five instead of two francs. If this were the only "variant," it would not be worth further discussion. But there is a very different story told of it in Mr. Symington Grieve's important work on "The Great Auk, its history, archæology, and remains," published in 1885. At p. 105 of this volume, Mr. Grieve writes of this very egg:—

"The following curious story, which is well-known to ornithologists, is so remarkable that we repeat it, and give a copy of Mr. R. Champley's original note, dated June 1, 1860: Mr. Bond [who became the purchaser of the egg in question upon Yarrell's death] says to R. C.—Yarrell told him that, walking near a village *near Boulogne*, he met a fishwoman having some guillemot's eggs. He asked her if she had any more; she said she had at her house. He went, when he saw hanging over the chimney-piece four wild swans' [eggs], with a great auk's [egg] hanging in the centre. She asked two francs each for them. He bought the auk's, and two swans'. She said her husband brought it from the fisheries. The great auk's egg sold at Stevens's sale to Mr. Gardner for £21, [and was] sold again by him to Mr. Bond for £26. Copied by R. Champley at Mr. Bond's, by whom the history was told."

Here then we have an important "variant" of Prof. Newton's version; and as it was taken down in writing in 1860, within four years of Yarrell's death, from the lips of the the late Mr. Bond, who had it from Yarrell himself, it seems to me that it ought not to be passed over in silence. At any rate, it affords some justification to the writers referred to by Prof. Newton (see the *Times* of February 23), who, commenting upon the recent remarkable sale, have naturally repeated the only history they could find of this egg, namely, that published in the latest book on the subject.

J. E. HARTING.

On M. Mercadier's Test of the Relative Validity of the Electrostatic and Electromagnetic Systems of Dimensions.

IN connection with the clear exposition of the true dimensions of electrical units given by Prof. Kücker in NATURE of the 22nd ult. it is well to bear in mind that Maxwell *long before the publi-*