

passed the tender years of early childhood." Heredity is indeed spoken of somewhat contemptuously in the book, and, bracketed with germs, is described as a fetish, "so blindly and superstitiously is it invoked." In the opinion of the author, five per cent. would be a fairer estimate for the hereditary diseases incident to adult humanity than even ten—an estimate previously conceded in the course of the argument. The book is not written for the practitioner, by whom, in fact, many of the opinions and views of the author might be challenged, but for the lay-man and woman, who will find in it many hints as to the diet and physical exercise of the body, which may be calculated to make easier the task of keeping the body in a state of health. Being intended for the perusal of the non-professional reader, the work throughout is written in a style which will be easily understood by all.

*Elementary Drawing: a Series of Practical Papers for Beginners.* Written and illustrated by Elisabeth Moore Hallowell. Pp. 54. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1897.)

AT first sight the scope of this small book does not seem to fall within the area covered by the columns of NATURE, the series of papers of which the work is composed having originally been written for the *Art Amateur*, "to give to beginners in drawing a simple explanation of some matters usually considered too elementary for text-books"; yet it will be owned by all that a knowledge of drawing is, if not absolutely necessary, very useful to the student of science in whatsoever branch he may be engaged, and thus a brief notice of the volume may not be out of place here. The book, although written in easy language, is not intended for very young readers, but "for those who are able to follow from one lesson to another, up to the point where the present volume ends and the general text-book begins." It will, we should think, be found very acceptable to many who have not had the advantage of early training in art, but who wish to gain some idea of its principles; and especially useful will it be to those to whom attendance at a drawing class is impracticable. A careful student of this unpretentious volume will be in possession of some very useful hints, and will have acquired knowledge which will stand him in good stead in his after studies.

*Botanisches Bilderbuch für Jung und Alt.* By Franz Bley. Part i. With explanatory text by H. Berdrow. Pp. 96. Plates 24. (Berlin: Gustav Schmidt, 1897.)

THE best way to obtain a knowledge of common flowers is to go into the woods and meadows with an outdoor botanist. Unfortunately, a naturalist cannot always be found able and willing to impart the required information, and the most satisfactory substitute in such cases is a collection of coloured pictures (uncoloured pictures are useless for purposes of identification) of flowering plants commonly seen. We have several works of this kind in our own language, a very good one being Mr. Edward Step's "Wayside and Woodland Blossoms." The volume before us is similar in character, though not so handy in size as Mr. Step's. There are 216 coloured figures of plants on twenty-four plates, and brief descriptions of each species represented. The species described and illustrated are those which flower in the first half of the year, and they are arranged according to the succession of the months. Another volume will be published for flowers of the second half-year. The figures are mostly very good, and the text has been designed to interest the reader in plant life and functions. The plant-lore referred to in the descriptions of many of the species will assist in popularising the book and making it acceptable to young students of botany in Germany.

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### 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 Volcanic Condition of Stromboli.

IN view of the fact that all published accounts of Stromboli, according to the *résumé* given by Bergeat ("Der Stromboli," A. Bergeat, Habilitationsschrift, München, 1896), have agreed in describing the volcano as being explosively active, there may some interest attach to a statement of the present condition of affairs, as seen by Prof. H. F. Reid, of Johns Hopkins University, and the writer, on October 27 and 28 of the present year. The westernmost of the four small craters described by Bergeat was not observed at all, the next two were discharging rather copious volumes of vapour, and the easternmost, or "old," crater was giving out a very little steam from its bottom. The most steam was issuing from cracks in the eastern rim of the "old" crater, especially from one at the north-eastern or seaward corner of the rim. Much steam was issuing from the southern rim overhanging the second and third craters and the ridge leading from it to the main mountain mass. Nothing in the nature of an eruption was taking place, and it was evident that the craters had been in this condition for some time. Later inquiry at Lipari elicited the information from Bartolo Nicotera, the guide, that there had been no eruption on Stromboli for about a year. The high ridge over the crater, known as the Cima, showed steam issuing from along its summit, more than 200 metres above the crater.

Naples, November 26.

E. O. HOVEY.

#### The Colours of Flowers Blooming Out of Season.

I HARDLY think it probable that you will be able to spare your valuable space for my communication; nevertheless, I venture to send you the following observations on the tendency of flowers to revert in colour when blooming out of season. We have had little frost here, and many flowers which are ordinarily out of bloom at this season still persist. The changes, however, in their normal colours are in some cases very remarkable. The red cactus dahlias are blooming almost orange, the outer florets being often nearly yellow. These dahlias are also, in many cases, showing a tendency to revert to the single form. A species of *tropeolum*, normally vivid scarlet, is blooming in a cool greenhouse, where air is kept on, and has in some cases reverted almost to clear yellow; a streak of red down the centre of the petal being the only remains of its normal colour. In both the above cases I note that the edges of the petals are the first to change. A species of *myosotis*, ordinarily of a deep and very vivid blue, is flowering now a clear rosy pink, without the least tinge of blue. The flowers are well opened and normal in size. Lastly, a pure white phlox of dwarf habit shows a tendency to revert in some of its blooms, though not in all, to a greenish yellow hue. Such cases are probably common; but it is with the feeling that they may point to climatic conditions as influencing the coloration of flowers, and as having, possibly, borne a large part in the gradual evolution of their respective tints, that I venture to record them.

The Manor House, Tarrant Gunville,  
Blandford, November 20.

E. HUGHES-GIBB.

#### A Rose-Coloured Rainbow.

ON page 263 of Lord Tennyson's "Memoirs" there is mention of a "red rainbow" seen at sunset in 1882. As it was considered noteworthy by Sir Norman Lockyer, and was the first he had heard of, it may be of interest respecting sunset phenomena that near Hayward's Heath, on June 29 of this year, at sunset there was a rainbow entirely of a clear rose-pink against heavy storm clouds over half the sky, and facing a deep golden sunset in a clear sky. It was a perfect arch, and lasted for some minutes. Just for a moment I saw a streak of pale sea-green in the midst of the rose colour.

Holy Cross Home, Hayward's Heath.

M. S. ZACHARY.