interest him concerning pearls, cameos and oysters. The nomenclature has been, in the main, brought up to date, the trumpet-shell figuring as *Lotorium variegatum* in place of the familiar *Triton tritonis*, while *Scala*, instead of *Scalaria*, stands for the precious wentletrap.

A Text-book of Astronomy. By Prof. George C. Comstock. Pp. viii+391. (New York and London : D. Appleton and Co., 1901.) Price 7s. 6d. net.

IT is an excellent sign that among recent works dealing with astronomy there have been some in which methods of teaching the elementary parts of the subject have formed a notable feature. The book under notice is to be regarded as one of this class, as the author, a well-known American astronomer, has endeavoured to " concentrate attention upon those parts of the subject that possess special educational value." The importance of observations with simple appliances is strongly insisted upon in the preface, but from this point of view the book is distinctly disappointing. It is true that in the earlier chapters an attempt is made to introduce practical exercises, some of them observational and others involving the construction or study of drawings ; but this admirable beginning is by no means consistently followed up. In fact, the greater part of the book does not strike us as being other than a general outline of the chief facts and principles of astronomy suitable for ordinary reading, except that at intervals the reader is expected to pause and answer a question, such as "What is the magnitude (of Algol) 43 days after a minimum ? " The practical method, however, might well have been further adopted ; a telescope of adequate power for the demonstration of many phenomena, such as the sun's rotation, can be cheaply and easily constructed, and graphical exercises might have been more frequently introduced with advantage. We notice, also, that the use of a globe in illustrating celestial motions is not mentioned at all. Nevertheless, so far as it goes, the practical work described will be of great value to students, and will doubtless encourage them to further efforts in the same direction.

The book touches upon nearly every branch of astronomy, and the explanations and descriptions are both concise and clear. The numerous illustrations have been selected and reproduced with great care, and, as the author remarks, are worthy of as careful a study as the text ; the diagram on p. 153, illustrating the path of the moon with respect to the sun, deserves special mention.

An Introduction to the Practical Use of Logarithms. By F. G. Taylor, M.A., B.Sc. Pp. vi + 63. (London : Longmans, Green & Co., 1901.) Price 1s. 6d.

THERE can be little doubt that much time is lost by students and others who have occasion to make numerical calculations through unfamiliarity with the practical advantages of logarithms. In the present little book, however, by the consistent employment of the simplest arithmetical illustrations, the author goes far to remove the mystery in which, to many students, the subject appears to be involved by fuller theoretical treatment. The explanations are clear throughout, and these, together with the numerous carefully selected examples, should enable a student of ordinary intelligence to quickly master the use of logarithmic tables. The tables themselves occupy but six pages, two for logarithms, two for reciprocals and two for anti-logarithms. A chapter on methods of rough calculation, intended to verify the results obtained by the use of logarithms, forms a valuable addition to the book. The general subject is excellently illustrated by the application to problems in mensuration, and the whole is brought well within the range of students who have no knowledge of algebra.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

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The Moon and Wet Days.

THOUGH it is counted heresy in some quarters to associate weather with the moon, the following results of a recent inquiry into the subject, whether held to be proof of lunar influence or not, might, I think, be of interest to many.

The period considered is the last 24 years. The data (which are for Greenwich) are these :—

(A) Days with ·5 in. of rain, or more, *in the year*.
(B) Days with ·4 in., or more, *in the summer half* (April to September).
(C) Days with ·2 in., or more, in the summer half.
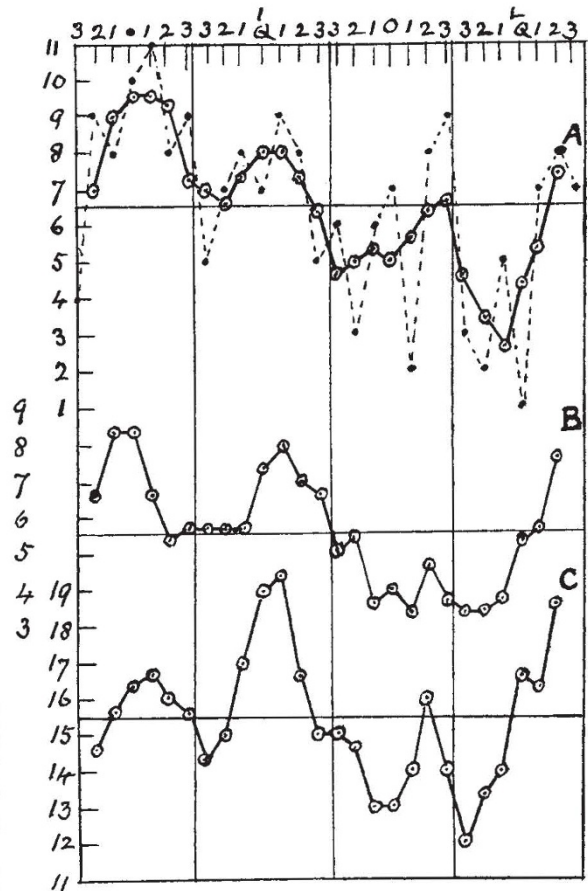
The method in each case was first to ascertain the distribution in seven days about each of the four lunar phases (*i.e.* how often each of those 28 days had rain amounting, *e.g.*, to ·5 in., or more), then smooth the series with averages of *three*.

Both smoothed and unsmoothed curves are given in the case of A ; but only the smoothed curves for B and C.

From the fact that four weeks does not quite cover the time of a synodical revolution of the moon (which is about 29½ days), there are a few wet days in each class not coming under any of the above categories. These may perhaps, with regard to the purpose of the inquiry, be left out of account. The totals dealt with are : A, 182 days ; B, 158 ; and C, 433. These come short of the actual totals by A, 7 days ; B, 8 ; C, 28.

Turning now to the curves, the recurrence of four long waves in the smoothed curve for A (less pronounced in C and B), may be noted, in passing, as a remarkable feature.