LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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The British Association and our Colonies.

PROF. MILNE'S letter in NATURE of November 23 (p. 77) will be read with pleasure by all scientific people in the colonies. The benefits to be derived from a colonial meeting such as he suggests are many and various, and I have no doubt will receive full consideration should the idea be given effect to.

Here in Africa, one piece of work which the British Association is the natural body to take up is that of the magnetic survey of the whole continent. The great lack of trustworthy data for immense tracts of this continent has been often commented on. When we remember how much of the continent is in British hands, and how the British Association since its inception has steadily helped and encouraged the study of earth magnetism, the fitness of bringing such a proposal before the association is apparent. At such a conference the possibility of a simultaneous magnetic survey of Australia would naturally be considered. Could these two surveys be carried out—even if very incompletely—they, with the surveys at present in progress and with the proposed ocean surveys of the Carnegie Institution, would form an invaluable contribution to our present knowledge of earth magnetism.

Africa has many other problems—educational, explorational, meteorological—the solution of which would be helped were they taken up at such a conference.

J. C. BEATTIE.

South African College, Cape Town, December 12, 1905.

Monotremes and Birds.

In Semon's *Zoologische Forschungsreisen*, Lieferung xxii. (1904), Disselhorst treats of "Die maennlichen Geschlechtsorgane der monotremen und einiger Marsupialien." On p. 123 are two text figures, both copied from Sir Everard Home, *Phil. Trans.*, 1802, plate xii. One represents the male genital apparatus of *Echidna hystrix*, the other, Fig. 1B of the German work, the stretched male organ of the same animal. Now this Fig. B is, in Home's paper, correctly named "penis of the Drake." Needless to say, this Drake's organ does not in the least agree with that of *Echidna*, as which it is described in the German work, and our author is sorely puzzled about some of the details, cf. p. 131. This may well be the case. Errors and blunders have been made ere now, but the serious point is that this Drake figure has, in the process of reproduction, assumed mammalian characters. In the original figure the base is surrounded by well-drawn feathers, and such are mentioned in the explanation of the plate. The thing is also correctly copied by Owen in his article Aves in Todd's "Cyclopædia," further in the "Anatomy of Vertebrates," vol. ii., Fig. 119, and Owen directs attention to an important error committed by Home in his interpretation of the urethra. But in the recent figure, wrongly attributed to *Echidna*, the feathers have lost their character as such, and have turned into hairy structures! Who has done this? The author or the artist, or have both combined to correct the faulty original? It is such a strikingly pretty figure that it is almost sure to be propagated, perhaps to be used as a proof of the affinity of the oviparous mammals. But a drake is a drake, for all that.

H. GADOW.

University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, December 20.

Sounding Stones at Ch'üfu, Shantung.

LAST July I happened to pass through Ch'üfu, the birth- and burial-place of Confucius. In "seeing the sights" of the town I found three very fine examples of "sounding stones," or "stone gongs" as they are sometimes called. These particular examples do not seem to be very well known except by Chinese; none of my foreign acquaintances who have been in Ch'üfu had noticed them. Photo. No. 1 shows the tomb of the grandson of Confucius. The cover of the incense dish (on which my servant is resting his hand) is made from stone, but when struck with a stick,

or even with the knuckles, it rings as though it were bronze. In fact, my man in the photograph refused to believe that it was anything but painted bronze until I myself assured him to the contrary. Photo. No. 2 shows two pillars (marked with crosses) of the balustrade in front of the principal hall of the great Confucian temple at Ch'üfu. Struck at any point with a piece of wood, they give a distinct musical note.

Inside the temple is a large tablet, about $5 \times 3 \times \frac{1}{2}$ feet, of the same stone. In this case the note produced varies according to the point at which the stone is struck. The stone from which all these bodies is made is a greyish oolitic limestone. I was informed that it came from a quarry at Kwan Ko Shan, about seventeen miles south-east of Ch'üfu. Most of the stone from this place has no musical

quality, but from time to time veins of it are found, and when found it is usually abundant. "Stone gongs" of this kind are found in all parts of the country, and some are in the possession of foreigners. So far as I can find out, they all come from this one locality. They have been known for many centuries, and it is recorded that the district from which they came paid its share of a certain special Imperial tax in "sounding stones." I should be pleased if any reader could give the cause of this very remarkable property, and if it is not understood I would gladly give what help I can towards elucidating it. During this journey I was pressed for time, and as my route lay directly east from Ch'üfu I was not able to visit

FIG. 1.—Grave of the grandson of Confucius. Cemetery of the K'ung family, Ch'üfu, Shantung.

FIG. 2.—Detail of Confucian Temple, Ch'üfu, Shantung.

the quarry. Should there be any object in doing so, however, I will take the first opportunity of returning and making any observations that I may be asked to make. Such an opportunity may occur at any time, and, in fact, could be easily made to occur, as the journey would only