Lehrbuch der Meteorologie. Second edition. By Prof. Julius Hann. Pp. 642. (Leipzig: Herm. Tauchnitz, 1905.) Price 24 marks.

IN the year 1901 the author of this volume published the first edition, and on its appearance it was universally announced as the "classic" of meteorological literature. The work itself was a veritable mine of information, and the host of reference to original sources made it an absolute necessity for anyone dealing with this science to have it in his possession.

We have now before us a second edition. In this the author has made considerable alteration. In the first place, the size of the volume, as regards amount of matter it contains, has been very much reduced, a host of original references have been dispensed with, and the subject is dealt with in a more brief form. So rapid has been the progress of meteorological science, and so many have been the changes in ideas on numerous fundamental issues, that in many places this matter has had to be completely overhauled. Thus, to take one instance, namely, the investigation of the upper air by means of kites, balloons, and *ballons-sondes*, new light has been thrown on the movements of atmospheric currents, and innumerable data collected relating to temperature, pressure, and other elements in the higher strata.

The above is one of many cases where reconstruction has been rigorously carried out. Further, the insertion of all this, the latest, material has necessitated a great number of new references, so that the present volume with regard to these may be considered as a supplement to the first.

Several new and useful tables have been inserted in an appendix, one of these being a table of mean monthly and annual temperatures of 143 places in different parts of the world.

In the text are eighty-nine figures, nine autotype plates, and fourteen charts. The get-up of the book is of the same high standard of order as that of the first edition, the paper and printing being all that could be desired.

The volume should be in the hands of everyone who is in any way interested in meteorology, and is another very valuable addition to our meteorological literature by the master of the subject.

The Uses of British Plants. By Rev. Prof. G. Henslow. Pp. vi+184. (London: Lovell Reeve and Co., Ltd., 1905.) Price 4s. 6d. net.

ABOUT forty years ago a book was published on the "Useful Plants of Great Britain," written by C. P. Johnson and illustrated by J. E. Sowerby. Judging from the few copies one meets with, there has not been in the past much demand for information of this nature, but there is some indication of increased interest being taken in economic botany. The arrangement adopted by Prof. Henslow, in which he follows the nomenclature and order laid down in Bentham's "British Flora," accompanied, too, by the same set of illustrations, makes this practically a companion volume. Owing to the cost of production or the discovery of better substitutes, several plants once grown in the British Isles for their products have gone out of cultivation; the dyes produced by *Rhamnus*, *Genista*, and *Rubia* have been superseded by aniline dyes, and very few woad mills remain; one of those still existing was described in NATURE, November 12, 1896; nettle-cloth is not likely to be revived unless the term is applied to the material produced from rhea or the Nilgherry nettle, two exotic *Urticaceæ*. Such productions, and the cultivation of certain plants formerly reputed to be efficacious, are mainly interesting on account of their

historical association, and with these the author deals sufficiently fully; also he has given a good deal of space to the derivations of the Latin names. On the other hand, he might have enlarged with advantage in the case of those plants which are still cultivated or which are closely allied to plants of economic value. The book is restricted to flowering plants.

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.]

Cheirality of Form of Crystals of Epsom Salt.

IN studying the optical behaviour of the optically active biaxial crystals of zinc sulphate ($\text{ZnSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$) and Epsom salt ($\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$), I found that the rotation (which, the crystal being trimetric, is the same for each optic axis) was to the left in all the thirteen crystals that I prepared. I then turned my attention to the crystalline form, which affords a more rapid means of determination of the cheirality, and is, moreover, applicable to small crystals. In the case of Epsom salt, twenty-two crystals were examined; sixteen of them were found to be positive, six doubtful, while not one was found to be negative. The crystal accepted as positive is that of which a diagram is given in Watt's "Dictionary of Chemistry" (vol. ii., p. 150, diag. 282, 1883). In examining the form, the smallest of the faces $+P/2$ and $-P/2$ was looked for, and then considered as belonging to the set of small faces, even if, as occasionally happened, others of the same set were large. The cheirality of form of zinc sulphate crystals is not marked enough to permit of any certainty of identification. The reason for this constant selection by the substance of a particular one of the two possible forms is perhaps that the crystallisation may have been occasioned by particles of organic dust that are themselves chiral.

H. C. POCKLINGTON.

Deposits on Telephone Wires.

AT East London, in the Cape Colony, one of the inhabitants recently complained that two telephone wires passing over his roof, an iron one, were seriously injuring it, and asked that they might be removed at once, and the building re-roofed at the cost of the Government. In support of his statements he referred to some lines of a whitish colour on the roof immediately under the wires. Many theories were advanced, one being that the moist sea air laden with salt had condensed on the wires, and that when the moisture had evaporated the salt had been shaken loose by the vibration and fallen on the roof, forming in time the lines referred to. The officials on the spot stated that they could taste the salt; but on some of the deposit being removed from the roof the iron was found to be quite intact. On the powder being analysed not a trace of salt or of any chloride, soluble or insoluble, could be found, and the result of the analysis showed the deposit to be nothing but silica, with very faint traces of iron and lime. The sand, a fine powder, must have been blown on to the wires when they were damp, and on evaporation of the moisture taking place have fallen on the roof owing to the vibration of the wires.

A SUBSCRIBER.

Sounding Stones.

APROPOS of Mr. Tingle's letter of last week, it may be of interest to note that fairly good specimens of "sounding stones" occur at Corick, on the borders of the barony of Erris, co. Mayo. The bridge at this village is known as the "musical bridge," from the fact that stones which form the coping of the parapet give out a musical note when struck with a piece of stone or metal.

T. DILLON.

Ballina, co. Mayo, January 8.