coast; whilst half an hour for tow netting, in view of the fact that two or three collections are apparently put into the same bottle, is certainly too long.

The illustrations, 123 in number, are mainly derived from photographs, the majority of which show a considerable lack of skill on the part of the photographer. One or two appear to be out of focus, many are too much of the soot and sawdust type; while in others the background chosen is not calculated to show up the "sitter" to the best advantage. Typographical errors, of which there are a fair number, are almost invariably confined to scientific names, such as *Nephtys* for *Nephthys*, *Maidæ* for *Maiadæ*, *Spangus* for *Spatangus*.

In spite of the above faults, we can, however, recommend the book to all beginners in the fascinating art of shore collecting, although, of course, it does not obviate the necessity of access to monographs on the various groups. R. A. T.

Field Operations of the Bureau of Soils, 1904. (Sixth Report, Pp. 1151 + a case of 53 maps. (Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, 1905.)

The United States Survey of Soils continues from year to year its enormous task, under the direction of its chief, Mr. Milton Whitney, and the present sixth report differs in no essential respect from its predecessors. The soil divisions are mapped upon a basis of physical texture, the same name being used right across the continent for soils which are judged to be of the same type, however different the origin or however remote the locality from that of the type originally credited with the name. It is just this classification which has been called in question by the critics of the survey in the United States, who discredit both the methods of identification and analysis which are adopted, and also the rapidity with which the work is pushed along. Certainly when the cost of the survey amounts to less than 10s. per square mile, as in the present case, the distribution of soils in the United States must be very different from what we are familiar with in the Old World, or else the maps can be little more than very sketchy first approximations. However, we are too far away to have any means of forming a judgment in this domestic discussion, but what the English reader will always find of value in this survey are the preliminary general accounts of the physiography and agricultural development of each area. There we get sketches of the style of farming and the local conditions which compare, though in a more scientific fashion, with the reports on the counties of England initiated by Arthur Young a little more than a hundred years ago. Doubtless in time these reports will have the same permanent value for America as a detailed picture of the state of the country and the position of its chief industry.

Hypnotism and Spiritism—A Critical and Medical Study. By Dr. Joseph Lapponi; translated by Mrs. Philip Gibbs. Pp. xiv + 268. (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1906.) Price 5s. net.

The opening chapter deals with the historical data connected with hypnotism and spiritism, and the author points out how spiritism passed through the various stages of spirit rapping up to definite materialisation. Dr. Lapponi then describes what is understood by hypnosis, and it is clear that his views are not in accord with those held by most authorities at the present time. When the reader reaches the chapter on "Details about Spiritism," he will find a most vivid description of a *séance*, as given by "some of the best and most esteemed mediums." The author honestly states that he has not had personal experi-

ence of the "truth and reality of the marvellous phenomena" which he describes; nevertheless, he is evidently convinced of its actual existence. Dr. Lapponi gives some interesting accounts of the mystic performances of the Indian fakirs, and also records some instances of telepathy.

In discussing the relationship of hypnotism and spiritism, he endeavours to prove that there is little or no relationship between them, a fact which few would dispute; on the other hand, we do not think that the arguments which he adduces would go far towards convincing the sceptic. The author admits that "illusions and hallucinations explain some isolated cases of spiritism"; he also allows that mediums may have largely had recourse to frauds in order to enhance their reputations, and he is generous enough further to concede that "to the spiritistic frauds done voluntarily may be added others, not only involuntary but unconscious"; but even after allowing all these, he considers that there are phenomena which are well authenticated, and for which neither deception, art, nor science can render an account. This may be true, but because a matter is too subtle to unravel does not justify us in assuming that it is the result of spiritism. The author's attempt to account for the valuelessness of spirit revelation is very feeble, but it is left to the closing chapter to reveal the worthlessness of spiritism, for here we read that "spiritism is always dangerous, harmful, immoral, reprehensive, to be condemned and most severely prohibited without reserve, in all its grades, forms, and possible manifestations," except, maybe, in some rare exceptions. Surely, if there are spirits with whom we can confer, some of them should be able to raise us to higher planes of thought, for the spirit world should belong to a hierarchy which is nearer to the perfect.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Festival of St. Alban.

WITH regard to what is said concerning the date of this festival in the review of the "Life of St. Patrick" in NATURE of July 25 (p. 296), it is to be noted that there is really only one date for the festival. In the time of Bede (H. E., i., 7), as in the pre-Reformation calendars of the English Church, as well as in the Latin Prayer Book of Queen Elizabeth, 1560, the date is June 22. But when the festival reappeared in the English Prayer Book of 1662 it was placed on June 17, an obvious error which is supposed to have arisen from wrongly writing xvii. for xxii. In the Roman calendar the date is, of course, June 22. C. S. TAYLOR.

Banwell Vicarage, July 26.

THE information supplied by the Rev. C. S. Taylor is most welcome. The evidence for regarding the 22nd as an arrested solstitial day, in connection with St. Alban, is now fairly conclusive.

(1) The 22nd was one of the three solstitial days about 303 A.D., the supposed date of Alban's martyrdom.

(2) If closely studied with that fact in view, the legend of his martyrdom, like those of the death of Patrick and Dewi, may reveal a clear midsummer festival setting. That much may be gathered from the statement that Alban was summoned to do sacrifice to the pagan gods. We know from other sources that people were penalised for non-attendance at the great pagan festivals.

(3) There is evidence that St. Alban's festival covered the three solstitial days.

(a) One old Welsh calendar fixes the festival on the 23rd.