known of Linacre's career, and then sets out the subject of his remarks as medical humanist and grammarian, and closes with the Linacre foundations themselves. On a theme so well worn no very striking facts can be expected, but we have a very readable presentation of the man himself, as shown in his works and benefactions to his own university and to Cambridge. The plates in half-tone are of the Holbein-like portrait attributed to Quentin Matsys, a copy of a drawing in the British Museum, and facsimiles of title-pages of nine of his printed works.

B. D. J.

Lands Beyond the Channel. An Elementary Study in Geography. By H. J. Mackinder. Pp. xii+276. (London: George Philip and Son, Ltd., 1908.) Price 1*s.* 9*d.*

IF geography could be learnt satisfactorily by reading alone it would be difficult to find a more suitable and attractive reading book than this. The Mediterranean Sea and Europe are described by the aid of interesting text and numerous maps and pictures. Historical paragraphs emphasising the interrelation of history and geography are frequent, and the pupil who reads the volume intelligently will have accumulated a great deal of curious and useful information. But for the right understanding of geography as a science this descriptive matter must be supplemented by carefully graduated practical exercises, judiciously designed to lead the learner to a knowledge of the foundations upon which geographical science rests.

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.*]

Earthquakes and John Wesley.

THE year 1755, the year of the great Lisbon earthquake, is so remarkable for its seismic activity that any facts relative to earthquakes in that year have their value, and I have recently stumbled on some information from a rather improbable source, viz. the journal of John Wesley.

On Monday, June 8, 1755, he was at Osmotherley, in Yorkshire, and made inquiries of eye- and ear-witnesses of the occurrences of March 25 preceding, and he describes what he heard of noises, motions of the earth, falling and splitting of rocks, and other seismic phenomena which occurred in that neighbourhood, and especially at Whiston Cliffs, about five miles from Thirsk. These phenomena, which commenced on March 25, seem to have gone on, if I read Wesley's statement aright, with intervals to the end of May. Wesley was so much interested in what he heard that on June 1 he made a personal visit to the chief scene of the desolation, and he gives a long and interesting account of what he saw in the vicinity of the Whiston Cliffs. He then proceeds to discuss the cause of what he had seen; if the cause were natural, it must, he says, have been fire, water, or air. He discusses and dismisses each of these as the possible cause, and concludes that it was the direct intervention of God at a spot near where the Hamilton races were held, "wrought in such a manner that many might see it and fear." In Mallet's catalogue of earthquakes (British Association reports for 1852) disturbances are mentioned at York on March 25 and 27 on the authority of *Kant. Géol. Phys.*, t. iv., p. 314, but no further mention is made of the facts stated by Wesley.

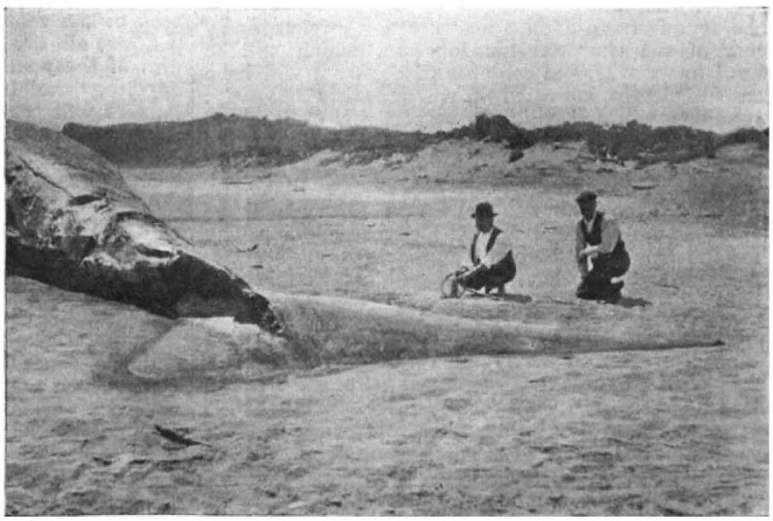
I may further add that Wesley also mentions and describes earthquakes in London on February 8, 1750, and March 8, 1750, neither of which is mentioned in Mallet's catalogue.

The passages in which Wesley describes these several seismic facts are too long for citation in your columns, but appear to me well worth reading alike by the seismologist and by the student of Wesley's character. They show an inquisitive mind interested in natural facts, but with a strong tendency to find immediate and direct moral teaching as their final cause. EDWARD FRY.

Failand House, Failand, near Bristol, November 17.

Large Blue Whales.

I HAVE just acquired for the Canterbury Museum the skeleton of a huge blue whale (*Balaenoptera sibbaldii*).



Tail of a Blue Whale stranded at Okarito.

The whale was cast on to the beach at Okarito, on the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand, early this year, and measured 87 feet in length.

My statement that the Okarito whale is among the largest known has been freely challenged in the local Press. The "Ostend whale," the length of which is rendered as 102 feet, has been instanced, but Beddard ("A Book of Whales," p. 155) evidently discredits the record as to size.

A Danish correspondent refers to the skeleton of a whale 150 feet in length, killed off the Orkneys and preserved in the Museum of Northern Antiquities, Copenhagen. Others state that specimens larger than ours may be seen in the British, Paris, and American museums.

I have naturally sought information as to the length of skeletons of great whales preserved in museums, but have been unable to obtain satisfactory data.

I shall be pleased, therefore, if directors of museums possessing the skeletons of large whales will kindly communicate with me direct, or, as the matter is one of general interest, through the medium of NATURE.

EDGAR R. WAITE.

Christchurch, New Zealand, October 8.

Potato Black Scab.

REFERRING to Prof. Johnson's letter in NATURE of November 19 (p. 67) on the black scab or wart disease of the potato, I should like to emphasise the importance of investigating in the open as well as in the laboratory the conditions determining the germination of the resting spores.