

the author goes on to say that "it follows" that the electrostatic unit =  $3 \times 10^{10}$  A.E.M.U.'s of E.M.F. = 300 volts. It would be a phenomenal beginner who was able to follow this reasoning without further explanation. A. RUSSELL.

#### OUR BOOKSHELF.

*Overcrowding and Defective Housing in the Rural Districts.* By Dr. H. B. Bashore. Pp. 92. (New York: J. Wiley and Sons, Inc.; London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1915.) Price 4s. 6d. net.

We are apt to associate overcrowding and defective housing with towns in the "old" countries, but it is well to realise that a condition of things as bad or worse may exist in our rural districts and in new settlements. In this little book Dr. Harvey Bashore, an inspector in the Pennsylvania Department of Health, describes conditions of overcrowding and defective housing which exist in his own district. He deals with the subject under four headings: (1) land overcrowding; (2) house overcrowding; (3) defective buildings; and (4) overcrowded and defective schools.

Instances of these various conditions, illustrated by well-reproduced plates, are given, and the results are summarised in a concluding chapter. The latter are exactly the same as in the great cities—lack of efficiency, disease, and premature disease to many—"while the great majority of people subjected to overcrowding and bad housing do not prematurely die, yet they have a lessened physical and mental vigour and are less able to do properly their daily work, and not only become a loss to themselves and their families, but to the State; and for ever stand on the threshold of that dread disease—tuberculosis; for tuberculosis is the one great disease of the overcrowded." As regards the remedy, Dr. Bashore says: "This problem cannot be attacked, as in the great cities, by legislative enactment or resort to legal measures, but the solution lies in proper education by the health authorities, by the schools, and by the Press, and the crusade must be kept up until the people understand that it pays—pays in real dollars and cents—to live in sanitary homes."

Although written from the American view-point, we would commend this little book to the notice of councillors, landlords, and health visitors in this country. R. T. HEWLETT.

*Typical Flies. A Photographic Atlas of Diptera, including Aphaniptera.* By E. K. Pearce. Pp. xii+47. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1915.) Price 5s. net.

THIS volume contains four pages of introduction, with instructions for collecting and for setting specimens of flies caught, Brauer's Classification of Diptera (four pages), and 155 reproductions in half-tone of photographs of fleas and flies. Its aim is to be of service to the beginner and to draw attention to the interest of an order of insect that is much neglected.

The photographs are as good as any we have seen of this class of insect—a peculiarly difficult

class to represent pictorially in any natural manner; the venation of the wings is well brought out wherever the banding or colouring of the wings does not obscure it, and there are excellent short notes as to habitat, larval habits, and so on under the pictures. We wish it had been possible to provide under the photographs line drawings of the more important types of venation and of some of the antennæ; but the interest taken in this group is so little that we imagine further expenditure on the volume was impossible.

The diversity of appearance is well brought out; to the student the venation systems depicted will be helpful, and to the beginner the variety of habitat and habit will be distinctly stimulating.

Probably no order of insect will so well repay the collector and investigator in this country, and we hope this volume may stimulate a wider interest in this fascinating group. H. M.-L.

#### 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.]

##### Destruction of Wasps.

You may be interested to know that whilst starting up a motor-cycle a few days since, I accidentally discovered that benzol sprayed over a wasp instantly killed it. I tried the same experiment with petrol with the same result.

Knowing of two nests in the neighbourhood I went that night and with a small oil gun injected two or three ounces of benzol into each nest. In the morning I found the two nests entirely destroyed.

Next night I visited an open nest which had been partly destroyed by another means, and in which several hundred wasps were still living. They covered an area as large as a cheese plate, and on lighting them up showed signs of activity. One squirt full of petrol was hastily sprayed over them, and the whole lot were instantly killed.

This method is so safe, simple, and effective that I feel it should be generally known. The petrol or benzol acts entirely by vaporisation and produces asphyxiation. It is not fired in any way.

A. H. MITCHELL.

Horn's Green, Knockholt, Kent, August 24.

##### Atlantic Oceanic Currents.

A LARGE bell-buoy was cast ashore at Porto Santo, the northern island of the Madeira group, in the early days of March in the present year.

I have ascertained that the buoy came from Pearl Reef, Magdalen Islands, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, having broken adrift from its moorings in the autumn of 1912, occupying thus two years and a half in transit. These facts are important at a time when our accepted notions of the strength and direction of the Atlantic currents are undergoing revision.

It may be remembered that Christopher Columbus, who resided at Porto Santo, and married a daughter of Peristrello, the Governor in those days, derived his inspiration and dream of lands beyond the sunset from the arrival of seed-pods and other suggestive matter drifting in upon the broad current which bathes these rocky shores.

MICHAEL C. GRABHAM.

Madeira, August 19.