

rogue," are words of distinct origin. With the very doubtful exception of the passage in "King Lear," Shakespeare's "chough" (as the present writer maintained many years ago in the *Zoologist*) is not the Cornish 'chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*), but the jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), and, to be strictly accurate, Tereus was not the brother, but the brother-in-law, of Philomela.

The numerous illustrations require no recommendation. They are our old familiar friends from Yarrell and Howard Saunders.

#### OUR BOOKSHELF.

*The Panjab, North-West Frontier Province, and Kashmir.* By Sir James Douie. Pp. xiv + 373. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1916.) Price 6s. net.

THE editor of the Cambridge series of Provincial Geographies of India made a happy selection when he entrusted the Panjab to Sir James Douie, who during thirty-five years' work as a member of the Indian Civil Service has held the posts of Chief Secretary, Financial Commissioner, and Officiating Lieutenant-Governor; what he does not know of the Province in which he served is not worth knowing. In a series of chapters packed with information he discusses the physiography, ethnology, sociology, history, archæology, and administration of an area of one quarter of a million square miles, comparable in extent, as well as in other respects, with Austria-Hungary. To summarise this amount of information within a limited space naturally prevents the elaboration of detail. The book, in fact, is an epitome of the information contained in the Imperial and Provincial Gazetteers, and in numberless other official publications.

An excellent feature of the work is the large series of photographs, maps, and diagrams. In the illustrations it is pleasant to notice that the personal element is well represented in John Lawrence, Charles Aitchison, Denzil Ibbetson, and Michael O'Dwyer—some of the able administrators for which the Province has been noted—and in those of native celebrities. In a new edition we may suggest the inclusion of some great soldiers—Pollock, Nott, Gough, Nicholson, Edwardes, Roberts, and Donald Stewart. It would also be a help to students to provide a short list of the more useful books dealing with various aspects of history, social life, travel and sport. The mistake (p. 24) of fixing Lord Roberts's march to Kabul in 1898 should be corrected. Every young officer, military and civil, posted to India should possess a copy of this useful book, and it might with advantage be introduced into the geography course in British and Indian schools.

*The Student's Handbook to the University and Colleges of Cambridge.* Fifteenth edition, revised to June 30, 1916. Pp. 16 + 704. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1916.) Price 3s. net.

THOUGH the statements contained in this handbook are not official, the information provided has been compiled from authentic sources and may be re-

garded as accurate. Parents sending sons to Cambridge will find the guide invaluable, especially the sections dealing with expenses and scholarships.

In view of the recent comparative inactivity of the University there are no additions to this issue of the handbook. Some temporary emergency regulations, occasioned by the war, affecting undergraduates are summarised conveniently, and altogether the general usefulness of the volume has been well maintained.

#### 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.]*

#### Scarcity of Wasps.

THE scarcity of wasps in Cheshire during the passing autumn, noted in *NATURE* of October 12 by Mr. H. V. Davis, has been equally remarkable in this district (Wigtownshire). Observation extending over very many seasons has convinced me that the abundance of queen wasps in spring is no indication of the number of swarms in late summer and autumn. That appears to be regulated by the character of the weather in June and July, which this year was unusually cold and wet. In the autumn of 1915 there was an extraordinary number of the nests of social wasps, both of the species that build underground and those that found arboreal colonies. In consequence I do not remember ever to have seen so many queen wasps about as there were in May of this year. Presumably each of these started building cells and laying eggs, but even if these hatched out, the cold was fatal to the larvæ (for wasps are essentially lovers of sunshine); no workers were reared to assist in forming the colony, which consequently came to naught. Last year I would have undertaken to find fifty wasps' nests within a radius of half a mile of this house; this year I did not know of one. HERBERT MAXWELL.

Monreith.

THE past summer has been so remarkable as regards these insects that a few notes from an old observer may be acceptable. The principal fact to be noticed is the extraordinary disproportion between the immense number of queens in spring (I cannot remember so many in upwards of fifty years' observations) and the scarcity of workers in the summer. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that there were more queens to be seen in the spring than workers when these were most numerous, in September. To go back to the beginning, an entry in my diary on October 18, 1915, states that on digging out a nest poisoned with cyanide two days previously, in which all the active workers had been killed, "a lot of quite lively ones, mostly queens," was found.

There can be little doubt that the cause of the scarcity of nests and workers was the cold and wet weather of mid-April. This supposition is supported by the fact that of the only four nests found and taken near this house, two were in fresh (and therefore warm) manure-heaps, one in the roof of the gardeners' bothy, and one in a sheltered hedge bottom. I have no recollection of having ever seen a nest in a dunghill before.

The discrepancy between the number of queens in