

trigonometrical functions, the equation of time, and the declination of the sun.

(2) The author of this little book on the rudiments of astronomy has endeavoured to avoid dealing with matter already treated in other books of the Hoepli series (entitled "Astronomy," "Gravitation," etc.) by explaining mainly the apparent phenomena on the celestial sphere. The word cosmography is thus used in a sense which is scarcely the usual one, as descriptive astronomy, astrophysics, and the orbits of the planets are omitted altogether; but phenomena like the libration of the moon and the tides are briefly described. Beginning with the figure of the earth and its daily rotation, the author passes on to the apparent annual motion of the sun, defines parallax, both daily and annual, and gives a table of twenty-seven stars the annual parallaxes of which are supposed to be best known, ranging from  $\alpha$  Centauri with  $0.76''$  down to Polaris with  $0.07''$ . The motion of the earth comes next, after which precession and nutation are briefly alluded to, and aberration more fully. The distances and periods of the satellites of the planets (including the recently discovered ones) are given in tabular form, but the motion of the moon and the effects of its principal perturbations are described in greater detail. The treatment of every subject throughout the book is concise; the explanations are given in simple and unadorned language, and ought to give beginners a clear idea of the principal phenomena of the heavens within the limits the author has set for himself.

#### OUR BOOKSHELF.

*British and Foreign Marbles and other Ornamental Stones: a Descriptive Catalogue of the Specimens in the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge.* By J. Watson. Pp. x+485. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1916.) Price 5s. net.

THE Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge, is indebted to the industry of Mr. Watson for its useful exhibit of polished marbles. This volume, which is supplementary to the one by the same author on "Building Stones," is essentially a descriptive guide to the marbles and other ornamental stones in the collection, about eight hundred in number. The specimens have been assembled from many parts of the world, and a number of well-known varieties are represented, as well as some that will be less familiar.

The geological arrangement adopted in the companion book has been wisely discarded in favour of a geographical one, but a short account of the distribution and geology of the marbles prefaces the detailed catalogue of each country's products.

As a handbook to the collection this volume is admirable; the descriptions are clear and, on the whole, adequate, and the remarks on the examples to be found in buildings have been prepared with care, but the major title is rather misleading, for as a work of reference its utility is lessened by

the circumstance that it deals only with specimens which happen to have been acquired by the museum. Thus steatite is represented only from Central Africa and India, and while there is a considerable amount of space devoted to fluor-spar and jade, there is no reference to chalcedony. Again, dolerites and felsites are represented by only a single sample of each, from India, and only two porphyries are mentioned. In view of the fact that so many of the igneous rocks are used primarily as ornamental stones, the inclusion of these few examples serves merely to emphasise the omission of the others.

Here and there statements of doubtful accuracy appear, as in the suggested coral origin of Rosewood marble; and some of the information is a trifle stale—for example, the remarks on the popularity of Derbyshire black marble.

The index is good and greatly enhances the value of the book for general use, but for practical purposes a list of the marbles grouped according to their prevailing colour should be added in another edition.

*The Rain-children. A Fairy-tale in Physics.*

By T. H. Orpen. With seven illustrations by C. E. Brock. Pp. vi+112. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d.) Price 2s. 6d.

IN designing the plan of this book the author seems to have thought of the nursery expedient of administering a medicinal powder in a spoonful of jam. His object appears to be to explain to children the formation and uses of the forms of water, but, having doubts of the intrinsic interest of the subject for his readers, he creates characters like Aunt Cold, Aunt Heat, Colonel Lightning, Sergeant Thunder, and Rain-children to describe to a little heroine he has created how natural phenomena can be explained. The result is a tale which little girls may like, but we believe boys usually prefer to keep their lessons and stories for separate occasions.

#### 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.]

#### University Doctorates.

I SEE from an announcement in the *Times* of December 22 that facilities are to be offered to advanced students of other universities by the University of Oxford in order to allow them to take the degree of Doctor of Science or of Doctor of Letters under new conditions.

It is to be hoped that, before any such scheme is discussed, a serious attempt may be made to introduce something like a uniform standard of attainment among our own universities for the doctorate, which is at present awarded for very different degrees of attainment and under very different conditions. When that uniformity has been adopted, any scheme offering facilities for the doctorate to graduates of the United