

OUR BOOKSHELF.

Laws of Physical Science: A Reference-book.

By Dr. E. F. Northrup. Pp. vii+210. (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Co., n.d.) Price 8s. 6d. net.

THOSE who at any time have had to look up the laws of some branch of physics rapidly must have felt very seriously the absence of any pocket-book of the type so much used by engineers in which those laws were briefly and clearly stated. They will be in a position to appreciate Dr. E. F. Northrup's book, in which the principal laws are summarised. In a book which so obviously fills a gap in our literature it is perhaps a little ungrateful to point out minor defects. The contrast between the thoroughness of the section devoted to current electricity and the incompleteness and lack of unity of some of the other sections is very marked. On p. 45, for example, the author speaks first of the "force" of a musical sound, and then of the "intensity" of a sound. On p. 47 the velocity of sound is given in terms of quantities expressed in gravitational units, while on p. 51, in another formula for the velocity, tensions are expressed in dynes and masses in grains (probably a misprint for grams). On p. 61 heat energy other than translatory energy is ignored, while on p. 68 many of the general properties of isothermal surfaces and of lines of flow are given as if they held for a point source only. While in magnetism there is a partial definition of unit pole, in electrostatics there is no definition of unit quantity of electricity, and formulæ are given sometimes with, sometimes without, the dielectric constant appearing. In the light section the laws of refraction include the statement that the incident and refracted rays are on opposite sides of the normal, while the laws of reflection contain no corresponding statement. Again, the relative sizes of object and image formed by a spherical mirror are stated on p. 168 as if the only possible objects and images were lines perpendicular to the axis of the mirror. In a second edition it is to be hoped that these defects will be remedied.

The Student's Handbook to the University and Colleges of Cambridge. Sixteenth edition. Pp. vii+703. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1917.) Price 6s. net.

THE present edition of this useful handbook has been revised to June 30 last. Three important additions only have been necessary in this issue, namely, the regulations for the new English Tripos, the new regulations for the Modern and Medieval Languages Tripos, and certain modifications of the conditions under which prize exercises are to be sent in. The war has occasioned further temporary emergency legislation, and the part of it affecting undergraduates is duly recorded here. The book has been compiled from authentic sources, and its helpfulness to students at Cambridge is undeniable.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Earthquake in Burma.

AN earthquake of some intensity was felt in parts of Lower Burma in the early morning of July 5 last, when the moon was in total eclipse. The only damage reported was at a famous pagoda at Pegu, a town forty-six miles distant by rail from Rangoon, an ancient structure held in great veneration by all Buddhists, and towering 324 ft. over all surrounding buildings. Its golden cone, or umbrella, studded with jewels to the value of many thousand pounds sterling, was shaken down, destroying several smaller pagodas at its base. Fortunately, there seems to have been no loss of life, for the fall happened about 4.40 a.m., when most people were in bed. On festival or fast days there are often thousands of visitors in the precincts of the pagoda, for worshippers come from hundreds of miles distant to this famous shrine, and though the population of the town is less than 20,000, there are often 150,000 there on such occasions. The pagoda trustees and Buddhist elders at once took steps and formed a committee to supervise the removal of the débris and to recover the valuable jewels which had fallen, and in this the civil and police officials rendered every assistance. The Lieutenant-Governor, directly he heard of the disaster, telegraphed to the Deputy-Commissioner:—"His Honour is much distressed to hear of the damage done by the earthquake to your beautiful Shwemawdaw Pagoda, and would be glad if you would kindly convey his sympathy to the pagoda trustees." The trustees wired the following reply:—"We thank his Honour most sincerely for his telegram expressing sympathy at damage done to our beautiful pagoda. Some valuables discovered among the débris."

The largest diamond, which was placed on the top of the golden umbrella, has not yet been recovered, and as Pegu has some thousands of non-Buddhists amongst its population, fears are entertained that many valuable jewels may get into dishonest hands.

The effect of the disaster has, of course, not been wholly bad for everyone. The Burma Railway has had its passenger service from all parts of its line strained to the uttermost. From 5000 to 10,000 people beyond the ordinary traffic are now daily arriving at the town. Taxi-cab and bullock-cart owners are making small fortunes carrying visitors to and from the railway station to the pagoda, situated about a mile distant. These visitors, of course, require food and lodging, so that money to an extent previously unknown, except in holiday or festival time, is now daily circulating in the place.

Pegu is a very ancient town, and was formerly the capital of an independent kingdom. It is mentioned by the first European travellers to Burma in the seventeenth century as a place of great wealth and very populous. It is now one of the largest rice-producing districts in Burma. It will not be very long before its famous pagoda is restored to all its former magnificence, for, although the Burmese are not very familiar or appreciative of co-operation in mundane transactions, all Buddhists are willing to spend money on such a work of "merit" as the restoration or rebuilding of a celebrated pagoda like the one at Pegu, and putting jewels or valuables at such a height in the air that nobody can see them. This characteristic