

geometry. It seems to me, therefore, a successful contribution to "technical education," and a valuable and suggestive attempt, but not altogether a successful one, to teach scientific geometry on true principles. The book is well adapted for middle-class schools. It is scarcely worth while to notice minor faults, either of the printer, which are very few, or of style. But it is really to be regretted that a degree should have been defined thus:—"Suppose we have a circumference sufficiently large to be divided easily into 360 equal parts, each part is called a degree." A degree is an angle, and this conception ought to be prominently brought forward.

J. M. WILSON

THE *Sitzungs-Berichte* of the Isis Natural History Society of Dresden for the first three months of the present year contains, as usual, a great number of short communications of more or less interest, and among them a few longer notices. Of the latter we may mention a note on the "Occurrence of Precious Stones in Saxon Switzerland," by M. A. Stelzner; a paper on "Diatomacææ," by Dr. Eulenstein; a notice by Count Pourtalès on the "American Deep Sea Explorations;" a paper on the "Course of the Boomerang," by Professor Schneider; and, especially, a paper (illustrated) by Dr. Geinitz, on some "Fossil Fruits from the Zechstein and Coal Measures." The society has established a section for prehistoric archaeology, the first meeting of which is here recorded; its proceedings consisted chiefly in the delivery of a long opening address by the President, Captain Oscar Schuster.

WHETHER the inhabitants of Rhenish Prussia and Westphalia are at the present moment devoting much of their attention to Natural History may fairly be doubted, but hitherto they have shown great activity in this department, and the publications of their Natural History Society generally contain much valuable matter. We have lately received the volume of their transactions for 1869 (*Verhandlungen des Naturhistorischen Vereins*, vol. xxvi.), in which we find several important papers. Kaltenbach contributes the continuation of his valuable "Natural History of the German Phytophagous Insects," consisting of an alphabetical list of the principal plants growing in Germany, either in a wild or cultivated state, with an account of the insects feeding upon each of them. Dr. C. Schlüter gives descriptions of numerous fossil Echinodermata from North Germany, with good illustrations on three large plates; whilst from Mr. F. Winter we have a contribution to the knowledge of the cryptogamic flora of the Saar district, now the scene of military operations. Another important botanical paper is a contribution to the flora of the Rhine by Dr. P. Wirtgen. In the section of the work denominated the "Correspondenzblatt" we find a note by Dr. Mohr on the "Theory of Coal," and in the "Proceedings of the Natural History and Medical Society of the Lower Rhine," a great number of notices upon scientific subjects of all sorts. This latter part is published separately for the present year. We have received the first number for 1870, including the proceedings during January and February.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his Correspondents. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

School Natural History Societies

In your notice of the various School Natural History Societies, you have omitted one, which has been established for more than a year, and is now in a very flourishing state. I allude to the Clifton College Scientific Society. Unfortunately, no one is here to give me any statistics, but I understand that it has seventy

members, with about twenty more waiting for admission. Mr. Percival has built a museum at a cost of 1,500*l.*, which will, I believe, be opened next September.

T. B. PRESTON

4, Lanesfield Villas, Durdham Down, Bristol

August 1

In the leading article of NATURE for July 28 (which I have just received), you name some of the chief public schools in which Natural History Societies exist. I am sorry you have omitted to mention Cheltenham College as among that number, and conclude the omission arose from ignorance of the fact. Perhaps it may be interesting to some readers of NATURE to hear that last March, a society consisting of members of that College, was founded under the presidency of the principal (Mr. Jex-Blake) to whom the college is much indebted for the encouragement of Natural Science as a part of the general education of the place.

The Society numbers about fifty members, the department chiefly worked at present being botany, at which several of the boys are becoming tolerably proficient, with a small sprinkling of devotees to geology and zoology.

Our difficulty lies in making meetings sufficiently attractive. Original papers, containing original observations, are scarcely to be expected from the boys themselves till they have been educated to observe; and in our case the number of masters who take an active part in the society is too few to keep interest alive. I cannot, however, doubt, in spite of such difficulties, which have been felt (and in some instances overcome) by others as well as ourselves, that these societies are sowing good seed of which it is not too much to hope the world and science will reap the fruit by-and-by.

L. C.

Boscaste, Cornwall, Aug. 10

Our Dublin Correspondent and the Parturition of the Kangaroo

ON my safe delivery, after a good deal of labour, from the perils of war, and on my arrival in London from Germany, I found your letter, enclosing a copy of Dr. J. Barker's communication as printed in your issue of the 14th ult. Dr. Barker has, apparently, no fault to find with my report, which, as a matter of necessity, could not be otherwise than imperfect. But he somewhat loftily criticises the writer of the comments on my report, who, in spite of the facetious title given to him by Dr. Barker, I believe to be a gentleman of considerable merit, and one whose comments on my correspondence appear to be always most just. Dr. Barker is right when he states that the late Earl of Derby's father did not observe the facts about the Kangaroo which he records; these were observed by the keeper of his collection, but they were placed on record by the Earl and hence the mistake. Dr. Barker seems annoyed that he should be made to appear as if he adopted the views, the absolute nonsense, of the writer whose paper he permitted to be read. Those who know Dr. Barker know what absolute nonsense it would be to believe him capable of adopting them. Yet, ought he not, as chairman, to have repudiated and refuted them? Would it not have been well if he had given the members of the learned societies, on the occasion in question, the information which he now offers to the readers of NATURE, and instead of telling them "that the actual passage of the foetal kangaroo from the uterus to the pouch was not yet proved," he had told them that the fact of there being such an actual passage had long since been proved; though how the actual transit, whether with the help of the mother's paws or lips, takes place, is still regarded as a matter for further observation; and so, instead of appearing to justify the reading of such a paper as the one referred to, he would from the extent of his knowledge on the subject, have reflected credit on his position, and on the societies to which he belongs, and have made, at least, an effort to advance the science he is so zealous for.

August 13

YOUR DUBLIN CORRESPONDENT

The Horse-Chestnut

I SAW to-day in the last number of NATURE, a letter on the meaning of the word horse-chestnut. As I do not see NATURE regularly, I do not know whether any of your correspondents have called your attention to the similar use of ἵππος in composition. In case this should have escaped them, I send the following extract from Liddell and Scott:—