

distribution is obtained. Another good point is that each of the great divisions of the earth's surface is shown in its relation to the whole; in other words, the earth is the unit throughout the book. But it is in the matter of illustrations that the work excels all others of its kind. The hundreds of pictures and maps are really works of art, and the author does not claim too much when he expresses the thought that they are superior to those in any similar school book. They are true to nature, most of them having been engraved from photographs; they well illustrate and supplement the text, and they present typical forms. Only in two or three cases can any fault be found. In some of the relief maps showing hemispheres of the earth, the parts of continents extending beyond the hemispheres are, as it were, lifted from the other side, and drawn in outside the containing circle. We are sure that this will lead to misconception, for children will get the idea that the continents are surfaces lying on the earth instead of portions of the earth itself above sea-level. But this is a small matter, and one easily remedied. The book is both attractive and instructive; it reflects great credit upon the author for his originality, and upon the publishers for their enterprise. We should be glad to see a similar work produced on this side of the Atlantic.

Theoretical Mechanics. Vol. i., *Solids.* Vol. ii., *Fluids.*
By J. Edward Taylor, M.A., B.Sc. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894.)

WHEN Solomon delivered himself of the sage remark that "there is no new thing under the sun," his prophetic eye may have been looking up the corridors of time, and seen the "soul-destroying text-books" (as Dr. Armstrong terms examination literature) of the present day. It is only rarely that a text-book writer goes beyond his brief. He designs his book to meet the requirements of a particular examination, and feels that he has performed his task successfully if future questions set by the examiners are more or less anticipated in the text. Such a writer has little scope for originality. If he departs much from the lines laid down in the examiners' syllabuses, his production fails in its object, and if he keeps the contents within the examiners' bounds, he incurs the censure of the reviewer. Thus it is that text-books are often mere summaries, and that there is a family likeness between those covering the same ground.

The volumes which Mr. Taylor has put together cannot, by the greatest stretch of imagination, be termed interesting. They are little more than collections of exercises and examples. We do not, however, raise any objection to this. Theoretical mechanics, like arithmetic, can only be learned by steadily working at exercises, and of these there is an abundance. The examples are also numerous, and they are so clear that the most obtuse student cannot fail to understand them. There is nothing remarkable about the illustrations except their familiarity. Most of them are very old, and many have done duty time after time.

The Animal as a Machine and a Prime Motor, and the Laws of Energetics. By R. H. Thurston. Pp. 97. (New York: John Wiley and Sons. London: Kegan Paul and Co., 1894.)

PROF. THURSTON, the head of Sibley College, Cornell University, ranks very high among American engineers. He is well known as the author of several widely-used text-books and of numerous important papers on engineering matters. The volume just published runs into less than one hundred pages; but in that space, energy and its transformations, and the relations between matter, force, and energy are skilfully described. The chapter which deals with the animal as a prime motor will be found attractive from many points of view, and should be

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read by all who have to do with the muscular work of men and animals. Among the many matters with which it is concerned are the processes of vital machines, the efficiency of the animal system, effective methods of application of power, intensity of muscular effort, dietaries, and the draught of vehicles. To a large extent the book is made up of reprints from magazines, and selections from various works; nevertheless, it contains many original and valuable points, and will add to the author's already high reputation.

The Aborigines of Western Australia. By Albert F. Calvert. Pp. 55. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, and Co., 1894.)

CAPTAIN WILLIAM DAMPIER, the first Englishman known to have made the acquaintance of the Australian natives, referred to them as "The poor winking people of New Holland . . . the miserablest people in the world." Mr. Calvert, who has had a little experience with the natives, looks upon their imperfections with a more lenient eye than the plain-spoken buccaneer, who visited Western Australia in 1688. He gives descriptions of a few of their habits and rites, the information being drawn in some cases from journals in the British Museum, while in others it is based upon his own recollections. Their marriage laws are curious. Children of either sex always take their mother's family name, but a man may not marry a woman of his own family name. Interesting descriptions are given of aboriginal funeral ceremonies, and these, with one or two other matters of interest to anthropologists, render the book worth reading, if a little discretion is used.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

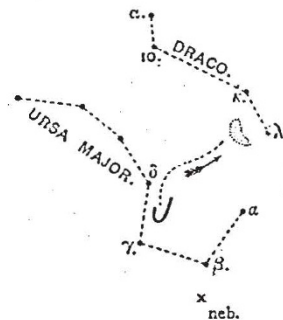
[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

A Remarkable Meteor.

THE course of the meteor of August 26 can only be ascertained by comparing observations from different points of view. If the meteor fell near Gloucester, other observers to the north, east, or west of that city will have seen it in a part of the heavens far removed from Draco and Ursa Major.

I was at Wimborne (about 75 miles south of Gloucester) on the 26th ult., and, as I was gazing up to the zenith at the time

POLE STAR



This figure accompanied Mr. Earle's letter last week. To it a *x* has been added to show the position of nebulous remains of meteor as seen from Wimborne.

the meteor fell, I missed its descent, but attracted by the vivid glow, I was just in time to catch sight of a brilliant light, which seemed to me two or three times as bright as Venus at its brightest. Any elongated trail disappeared quickly, but a