

OUR BOOK SHELF.

The Story of Germ Life. Bacteria. By H. W. Conn. From the Library of Useful Stories. (London: George Newnes, Ltd, 1897.)

THIS is a laborious and conscientious compilation of facts about bacteria, made ostensibly with the object of removing the slur said to have been cast upon these minute vegetables by an unsympathetic and unenlightened public. Had the writer been rather less ambitious in his desire to impart all the information he has collected, the story he tries to tell might have gained in the telling, and we should have had less of a record and more of a narrative concerning the habits and idiosyncrasies which prevail amongst the members of a microbial community. The tone adopted is often authoritative, and we should be glad to learn on what grounds Mr. Conn ventures to assert so positively that "preventive medicine will always remain unimportant."

The book claims thirty-four illustrations as an addition to the text, which are intended to represent various varieties of bacteria. Does Mr. Conn imagine because he is supposed to be talking to the uninitiated that his pictures of bacteria must be therefore correspondingly large, much in the same way as some people shout at foreigners, with the idea of making themselves more easily understood? As no information is given of the relation which exists between the size of the original object and the terrible travesties by which they are represented in the text, we much doubt if all the persuasive powers of the author will succeed in making the public regard his microbes in a friendly light.

Mr. Conn, however, has the merit of having conscientiously endeavoured to obtain accuracy in the manipulation of his material, a merit which is none too common in the popular treatment of scientific subjects, and the little volume bears throughout the impress of one who is an investigator and not only a writer.

G. C. FRANKLAND.

Natural Elementary Geography. By Jacques W. Redway. Pp. 144. (New York: American Book Co., 1897.)

THE illustrations are so numerous and attractive in this volume, that they make a picture-book of geography. The book has been constructed upon the plan recommended by the Committee of Fifteen appointed to consider the lines along which instruction in elementary science should be given (see NATURE, vol. liv. p. 310, 1896). The view of the Committee was that geography should be the study of the physical environment of man, and this conception has been borne in mind in the preparation of the volume before us. Beginning with familiar facts, the pupil is led naturally to knowledge beyond the range of his observation; generalisations never being made until the materials for their formation have been studied. He is encouraged to think for himself, by making much of the text interrogative, and providing material for the correlation and comparison of the characteristics of different districts; he is shown the value of map drawing and sand modelling in elementary geography, and relief maps give him good general ideas of the topography of the continents.

The pictures illustrate simple subjects, and will instruct as well as interest the young pupils who use the book.

As the book is an American production, it is largely devoted to the geography of the United States, less than two pages being given to the British Isles.

Kew Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information, 1896. (London: H.M. Stationery Office.)

THE Bulletins issued from the Royal Gardens, Kew, during 1896, are bound together with a very full index in the volume before us, the result being a valuable col-

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lection of miscellaneous botanical information. Many of the articles were referred to in our Notes when the Bulletins containing them appeared; nevertheless, attention may again be usefully directed to the articles on root diseases caused by parasitic fungi, natural sugar in tobacco, the new rubber industry in Lagos, sheep-bushes and salt-bushes, the cultivation of india-rubber in Assam, the botany of Formosa, German colonies in Tropical Africa and the Pacific, the Highland Coffee of Sierra Leone, and the flora of Tibet. The volume contains a review of the various aspects of the work of Kew since 1887, when the now familiar Kew Bulletin first made its appearance. We reprint this retrospect in another part of the present issue; and it furnishes the best of evidence of the active part which Kew plays in the development of our tropical possessions.

Wild Neighbours: Out-door Studies in the United States. By Ernest Ingersoll. Pp. viii + 301. Woodcuts. (New York and London: Macmillan and Co., 1897.)

THIS collection of articles from various magazines may be recommended to observers, and especially to young observers, of North American life. It contains a good deal of information, is written in an easy style, and bears frequent marks of personal familiarity with the animals described. A foreigner, visiting the United States for the first time, would pick up from this book, very rapidly and pleasantly, such knowledge of the commoner quadrupeds as he might extract from a well-informed naturalist, native to the country, in two or three weeks. The author has the habit of inquiry, and this renders his book particularly fit for young people, who may hope to fall in with grey squirrels, Canadian porcupines, skunks, racoons and wood-chucks. Perhaps the chapter on the "Badger and his kin" might leave the impression that shrews and moles are near relatives of the badger. "Animal training and animal intelligence" is a little bookish; and the performing elephants, &c., have little to do with the main subject. But these are trifles. The book is good of its kind.

L. C. M.

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.

Edible Copepoda.

IT is no novelty to biologists that the Copepoda of the sea are edible; but it may interest some of your readers to hear that today, when passing through the Labrador current, in about long. 50° W., we caught, cooked, and ate a number of the large Copepoda which swarm there. It certainly seemed a new idea to the captain and some of the British Association passengers, who partook of the Copepoda stew, that it was possible to collect from an Atlantic liner going at full speed a sufficient quantity of these pelagic animals to make a respectable dish.

I may add that the collecting, on Dr. John Murray's plan, is as easy as the cooking. The sea-water is pumped into the ship, and is strained as it runs out through five silk nets of different degrees of fineness—four of them on overflow and taps running continuously day and night, the fifth in the bath worked intermittently for certain hours.

W. A. HERDMAN.

S.s. *Parisian*, September 29.

Brief Method of Dividing a Given Number by 9 or 11.

I SHALL be grateful if you will allow me to communicate, through your columns, to mathematicians generally, but specially to those engaged in teaching arithmetic, two new rules, which