

physical investigators, accompanied by numerous pleasing portraits. A steel-plate portrait of Mr. J. W. Swann heads this section.

The second Directory contains "a complete record of all the industries directly or indirectly connected with electricity and magnetism, and the names and addresses of manufacturers in Great Britain, India, the Colonies, America, the Continent, &c." Every means has been taken to facilitate reference, and to make the Directory of service to all who are concerned with electrical industries.

*A Flower Hunter in Queensland and New Zealand.* By Mrs. Rowan. Pp. xiii + 272. (London: Murray, 1898.)

THIS book is one to be laid down with regret, so brightly does the authoress tell of very varied scenes and experiences, and so easily is the reader carried along with her through them. There are few books of travels in which the fascination of the tropics to a naturalist is so evident, or that would more strongly arouse the desire to see for oneself what is here so well described. But the other side of the shield is no less vividly placed before the reader, and the price at which alone the pleasures of tropical travel can be bought can be well realised from it. Old travellers will find their experiences recalled, and will bear witness to the accuracy of Mrs. Rowan's descriptions alike of the beauties and of the discomforts of the tropics, and will recognise that the latter are expressed in no overstrained terms. There are many interesting references to the earlier history of the Colonies, and others, equally interesting, to points in natural history, though in a few of the latter the want of technical knowledge shows itself. Many and wonderful as are the powers of ants, observed in and authenticated from all parts of the world, we should have hesitated to believe about the nests of the green ants of Queensland, that "leaves and flowers are spun together by spiders that the ants keep for the purpose." Mr. Saville-Kent's statement that he has observed the ants use their own full-fed larvæ to supply the silk required for spinning the leaves together, affords an explanation sufficiently curious, but more in accordance with what we should expect. Numerous excellent views add to the attractiveness of the volume. It deserves, and will doubtless receive, a welcome from those interested in travels and natural history.

*Introduction to Chemical Methods of Clinical Diagnosis.*

By D. H. Tappeiner (Munich). Translated from the sixth German edition, with an appendix on microbiological methods of diagnosis, by Edmond I. McWeeney, M.A., M.D. (Roy. Univ. of Ireland), Professor of Pathology and Bacteriology C.U. Med. Sch., &c. Pp. vii + 152. Figs. 22. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898.)

THE little book before us consists of two parts—the first, chemical, the second, what the author calls microbiological. The term micro-biological is an accurate one, and includes the usual bacteriological work on the one hand, and the examination of blood corpuscles and the morphological elements of the secretions on the other. Any system of classification—and one must have some—has its disadvantages: the present one seems to work very well.

The book is well up to date, serum diagnosis and the chemical examination of the gastric contents being contained in it. We think under the chemistry of the urine a method for the quantitative estimation of urea and uric acid ought to have been included. As far as we are aware, there is no book in English of such small bulk which contains so complete an account of chemical and bacteriological or microbiological diagnostic methods. It will not, of course, compete with the larger books on this subject, as, for instance, von Jaksch, but will doubtless have a sale, and deserves it.

F. W. T.

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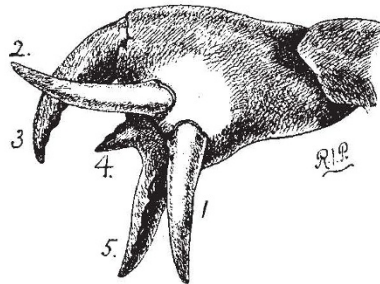
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Five-fingered Crab.

DURING a recent visit to the museum at Dover, I noticed in the case allotted to the Crustacea a remarkable instance of malformation affecting the right pincer of a half-grown specimen of our common edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*); and not recollecting to have seen the like either figured or described, I venture to think the publication of the subjoined sketch, together with a few words of explanation, may prove of interest to the readers of NATURE.

A glance at this sketch will show that there are three complete subequal movable fingers or dactylopodites, numbered 1, 2, 3. Of these, number 3 clearly corresponds to the single movable finger of the normal pincer, numbers 1 and 2 being supernumerary and articulated close together upon an elevation of the hand (propodite), which is much thickened in this region. The two remaining fingers (indices) are immovable. Number 4 is very much the shorter of the two, number 5 being quite comparable in size to either of the three movable digits. Judging from its size and the spot whence it emerges from the hand, the larger index (5) represents the immovable finger of the normal pincer; but its toothed edge is directed, not towards the normal finger (3), but towards the supernumerary finger (1). The smaller index finger (4), on the contrary, has its biting margin turned towards the biting margin of the normal movable finger



(3), and in all respects, except size and point of origin, corresponds exactly to the immovable finger of the normal pincer. When the movable digits are closed, number 1 passes on the under side of 5, number 2 on the upper side of 3, and number 3 shuts directly upon 4.

I am only acquainted with records of two cases of malformation in crabs' claws resembling this specimen in the Dover Museum. One of these is figured and described by Mr. Bateson (*Materials for the Study of Variation*, p. 530, No. 815; also *Proc. Zool. Soc.*, 1890, p. 581); the other by M. Sénéchal (*Bull. Soc. Zool. France*, 1888, p. 123). In the former, however, the supernumerary movable fingers numbered 1 and 2 in the figure of the Dover specimen are represented by a single dactylopodite, which, nevertheless, shows its double nature by being divided at the tip and furnished with two rows of teeth along its biting edge. In the example observed by Sénéchal, on the contrary, there are three complete movable digits arranged apparently very much as in the specimen here described and figured; but the process from the propodite (hand) is represented by a broad plate consisting of three only partially separated indices.

February 27.

R. I. POCKOCK.

Dew and Absorption.

I AM engaged on some daily experiments with a view to measure dew as rain in lineal inches. At present, however, I cannot distinguish between dew and absorption.

I fill a small cylinder (A) of tinned iron—a tobacco canister—to within about 1 inch of the top with garden soil, dry it at 212° F., weigh, expose it over-night, and re-weigh at 9 a.m. before the sun comes on it.

I now purpose to expose another similar tin (B) with ten circular holes pierced near its rim, and covered with a horizontal glass plate.