

In the chapter on plants, roots are said "to suck up water through tiny mouths," "to search for lime salts," and "to pick up compounds of potash." Of some plants we read, "They determined to do by cunning what they could not accomplish by force," "One very clever tree seems to have foreseen this danger and provided a remedy." "The hazel never intended to grow nuts either for boys or squirrels." "The pitcher plant and Venus's fly trap which set most ingenious snares for insects, and devour them when caught."

The point of view of the whole of this chapter is unscientific, for plants do not do any of these things intentionally, and to attribute intelligence to them is misleading.

The illustrations are line drawings enclosed in circles for reproduction as lantern slides. In many cases a scale should have been provided. The diagram of a bean seed (p. 49) is very poor.

*Gold Seeking in South Africa: a Handbook of Hints for intending Explorers, Prospectors and Settlers. With a chapter on the Agricultural Prospects of South Africa.* By Theo Kassner. Pp. x + 134; with maps and illustrations. (London: Charles Griffin and Co., Ltd., 1902.) Price 4s. 6d.

Now that a new era is opening in South Africa, the appearance of any book giving information likely to be useful to intending immigrants is opportune. It will not be taken for granted by everyone that the last discoveries of gold in the Transvaal have already been made, and the venturesome prospectors who go there should include this little book in their outfit, as it is written by one who knows the country well. It contains some useful notes on the geology and history of the Transvaal goldfields, and a number of sketch maps. The De Kaap goldfield is treated somewhat more at length than the others, although even this account can hardly be called exhaustive. The illustrations are numerous, but a protest must be made against the inclusion of some of them, particularly of Fig. 6, which is said to represent a pestle and mortar.

*A Text-Book of Inorganic Chemistry.* By Dr. A. F. Holleman. Rendered into English by Hermon C. Cooper. Pp. viii + 458. (New York: John Wiley and Sons; London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1902.) Price 10s. 6d.

THE German edition of this Dutch work was noticed in NATURE, vol. lxii. p. 598, October 18, 1900. A reperusal shows that considerable improvements have been made in the English version. The translation is entirely satisfactory, and the book may be recommended as a lucid and scientific account of inorganic chemistry. It includes a great deal of well-expounded physical chemistry and also many incidental matters of interest that are not usually found in works on inorganic chemistry. It is likely to prove very acceptable to those who wish to have a moderately advanced book of inorganic chemistry embodying an unaggressive presentation of the most modern discoveries and theories.

*The Bernese Oberland.* By G. Hasler. Vol. i. From the Gemmi to the Mönchjoch. Pp. xxv + 164. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902.) Price 10s.

THIS is the first volume of a series of four intended to guide climbers to the peaks and passes of the High Alps of the Bernese Oberland. The routes are arranged in chronological order of the conquest of the peaks to which they lead, and are dealt with in six sections referring to the Balmhorn, Breithorn, Blümlisalp, Bietschhorn, Aletschhorn and Jungfrau groups. With this guide in his pocket, a climber will be able to explore districts which, happily, have not been entirely permeated by the show and tourist spirit characteristic of more frequented spots, and are full of interest.

NO. 1714, VOL. 66]

### 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.]

#### Archæological Remains on the Summit of the Nevado de Chañi.

DURING the excursions that were made under my direction in 1901-1902 in the north of Argentina and the south of Bolivia from the Puna de Atacama to Crevaux at Pilcomayo, some of my comrades climbed to the top of Nevado de Chañi about 6100 metres in Puna de Jujuy.

Two ascents were made, the first by Count Eric von Rosen, the second by Dr. R. Fries, Mr. G. von Hofsten and Mr. Wenceslao Mercado. Von Rosen ascended quite near to the top, the others reached it. The summit is of granite; on the north-west side the rock is sandstone.

Dr. Fries made botanical collections. On the top he found lichens. The microscopical life of the snow was poor. The snow line was about 5600 metres. On the side of the mountain there are remains of old houses. On the top there are small walls, and there Hofsten and Fries found pieces of pottery, a little green stone worked by man, a depot of wood of cactus, tola, &c. The walls were built in two small squares with one side open. One of the pieces of pottery was painted with a wedge-shaped (kilformigt) ornament, quite similar to ornaments found by Count von Rosen on pottery from Ojo de Agua, a pre-Columbian "pueblo" in the Quebrada del Toro, some miles to the south. The wood was found both inside and outside of the walls and very well preserved; probably this may be explained from the fact that at this height there are no, or few, microbes. Also in the Puna about 3500 metres above the sea in the pre-Columbian grave-fields, there are still preserved pieces of clothes, skin, instruments of wood, &c.

It seems to me probable that these small walls on the top of the Chañi are the remains of an old sacrifice or signal place from pre-Columbian time.

ERLAND NORDENSKIÖLD.

Dalbyo, August 14.

#### Radiant Point of the Perseids.

YESTERDAY morning, August 11, I watched the northern sky for shooting stars from a place near Baddeck, Nova Scotia, from oh. 30m. to 2h. 15m. (Atlantic time). During this period I observed forty-nine meteors—mostly faint—forty-one of which appeared to radiate from the constellation Perseus.

While trying to locate the radiant point, I noticed a speck of light flash out in Perseus, which died away without apparent change of position, as though a third-magnitude star had suddenly appeared and disappeared. This was probably due to a meteor advancing directly in the line of sight, in which case the location of the luminous point perceived may be of importance to astronomers, as an indication of the radiant point of the Perseids.

The right ascension was about 2h. 35m., declination +56°, as nearly as I can make out from a star chart. I may say frankly, however, that I am not accustomed to make observations of astronomical positions. I can point out the exact position in the sky, and would be very glad if some of my astronomical friends would care to verify the R.A. and Decl.

I may add that the paths of most of the Perseids observed seemed to intersect at or near the point where the stationary meteor appeared.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL.

Baddeck, N.S., August 12.

#### Earth Surface Vibrations.

IN NATURE for August 14, Mr. Charles Stewart writes from the Cape stating that exceptionally rapid barometric variations took place there on the morning of May 28. Mr. Hill states in the same number of NATURE that on the morning of May 8, Mr. Ferdinand Clerc, at St. Pierre, "observed the needle of a large aneroid barometer pulsating violently."

The two similar barometric movements at different places suggest that the air disturbances at St. Pierre did not cause the barometric movement there.

Mr. Stewart assumes there was an earthquake at the Cape for the reasons he gives. But the Royal Observatory showed no record of any seismic disturbance.