

expense, twenty or thirty days being required to reach the highlands from Obok. However, the only route previously available took forty or fifty days for the same transit. Transportation is very expensive, reaching four or five hundred dollars per ton; so that only the most valuable goods, such as arms and ammunition, can be profitably sent in, and gold, ivory, and musk brought out. However, Shoa has a population of three millions, intelligent and semi-civilized, whose manners and customs approach those of Europe, who are Christians, and are governed by a code of laws derived from the Institutes of Justinian. The construction of a railway of two or three hundred miles in length would open an immense market for the manufactured goods of Europe. Soleillet's labors have been rewarded by the cross of the legion of honor.

INGERSOLL'S COUNTRY COUSINS.

MR. INGERSOLL'S 'Short studies in natural history' is a revised reprint of a number of handsomely illustrated articles on a variety of subjects, which have recently appeared in various popular magazines. Of the twenty-one chapters, three are devoted to birds; one each to shrews and seals; three to oysters and their enemies; one each to rattlesnakes, squids and their allies, elk-antlers, the pompano shells, the caverns at Luray and at Pike's Peak, the abalone, shell-money of the American Indians, etc. On many of these subjects the author writes from personal observation; but much of the book, as might be expected, is compiled. In detailing his own observations, he seldom wanders from the mark; but, in treating subjects at second hand, he is occasionally betrayed into misstatements, either through inattention or by his authorities, whom he is not in position to properly weigh. We are surprised, for instance, that he should soberly repeat the assertion that mocking-birds are able to kill large snakes by beating them with their wings. He shows a not very clear conception of his subject, when, in speaking of the shrews, he states that the smallest American species belong to the genus *Blarina*; nor is this the only glaring inaccuracy in the chapter on these animals. A very excellent account of the large-billed water-thrush (*Siurus motacilla*) is marred at its close by the statement, 'This is a northern bird,' — the opposite of the truth, when contrasted, as here, with the small-billed species. Equally careless and inexcusable is the statement that martens, as well as weasels and ermines, turn white in winter. The interesting

and very sensible article on 'Rattlesnakes in fact and fancy,' however, while not wholly free from errors, treats the subject of 'mimicry' in relation to the rattles with commendable judgment. In the account of star-fishes as enemies of the oyster, there are some overdrawn statements respecting the power of multiplication by division possessed by star-fishes. In the chapter on 'Periwinkles and other oyster-pests,' the large 'winkles,' or 'conchs,' of the genera *Sycotypus* and *Fulgar*, are erroneously stated to be unprovided with a lingual ribbon of teeth. The quahaug is said to be usually safe from the ravages of these species; but this is by no means the case, since at some localities we have found the quahaug to be their principal prey, even the largest specimens not escaping their rapacity. It is stated, on the authority of 'an intelligent man,' that *Fulgar carica* is able to draw even the razor-shell out of its burrow, and devour it; while the fact is that this is done by even very young examples. The chapter on 'Seals and seal-hunting in the North Atlantic' is far from accurate in many of its statements; but, strangest of all, under the page-heading 'A bit of comparative anatomy,' we are told that the tail of the whale, and of cetaceans in general, is not a 'tail' at all, but is structurally homologous — having the same component bones — with the hind-flippers of a seal and the hind-limbs of other mammals. Not to cite other frequent evidences of either carelessness or ignorance, the foregoing will show that a very readable, and in the main commendable, book may contain faults of a very serious character. The author tells us the book is written in the hope that it may "contain not only some entertainment, but also helpful suggestions for those who take delight in outdoor studies." It certainly does contain a very large amount of interesting information very entertainingly told, few writers of popular natural-history books having either the literary ability or the knowledge shown by Mr. Ingersoll in the present series of papers. It is the greater pity that here and there he should be found so grievously tripping.

The book is very carefully and attractively printed, and the illustrations are artistic and fitting; but even here the frontispiece is entitled 'Tree toads,' while only one of the two species figured is a tree-toad, though both are placed *on a tree*; the other being the wood-frog, and as such is correctly referred to in the text. In the explanation of the cut of a shrew's skull (p. 35), 'under side of skull' should be 'upper side of skull.'

Country cousins: short studies in the natural history of the United States. By ERNEST INGERSOLL. New York, Harper & brothers, 1884. 252 p., illustr. 8°.