

the purpose of initiating investigations in this direction. At the instance of the same gentleman, a similar sum was recently obtained out of the Government grant administered by the Royal Society, shortly after which the separate Committees appointed to administer the two grants agreed to combine for the purpose "of reporting on the present state of our knowledge of the zoology and botany of the West India Islands, and of taking steps to investigate ascertained deficiencies in the fauna and flora."

The joint Committee thus formed consists of Prof. Flower, Mr. Carruthers, Mr. Thiselton Dyer, Dr. Günther, Prof. Newton, Mr. Sclater, Dr. Sharpe, Lieut.-Col. Feilden, and Mr. D. Morris. Prof. Flower has been elected Chairman of the Committee; Mr. Thiselton Dyer, Secretary; and Mr. Sclater, Treasurer.

Lieut.-Col. Feilden having accepted a colonial appointment in Barbados will be in future resident at Bridge-Town, where he will act as local Secretary of the Committee, while Dr. H. A. Alford Nicholls, F.L.S., C.M.Z.S., has kindly agreed to assist in the same capacity in Dominica. In order to commence their investigations without delay, the Committee have secured the services of Mr. George A. Ramage, who was lately associated with Mr. Ridley in his expedition to the island of Fernando Noronha, and has since been collecting in Pernambuco. Mr. Ramage arrived in Dominica in March last, and has proceeded to his work with great zeal. In May, after passing five weeks at Laudat, on the right bank of the Roseau River, about 2000 feet above the sea-level, he moved to St. Aroment, an estate belonging to Dr. Nicholls, just above Roseau, which he found to be a better locality for getting his plants dried. At Laudat he met with great difficulty in this matter on account of the extreme wetness of the climate. Writing in May last, Mr. Ramage speaks of having got, besides his plants, "a good lot of insects, lizards, small snakes, and land-molluscs." Besides these, he had also obtained three specimens of *Peripatus*. This is a valuable discovery, as this singular organism was originally discovered in Dominica by Guilding many years ago, and has not been since obtained in the same locality.

After exploring Dominica, Mr. Ramage will probably receive instructions to proceed to the other islands of the Leeward group, some of which are almost entirely unworked as regards their animal and vegetable life. Now that this important investigation has been so fairly started, it is hoped that little difficulty will be experienced in obtaining further assistance from the British Association and the Royal Society. It should, perhaps, be mentioned that complete sets of all the specimens obtained will be placed in the British Museum and Kew Herbarium, the Directors of these two Institutions being themselves both members of the Committee.

SONNET*

TO A YOUNG LADY WITH A CONTRALTO VOICE,

On her singing, on a warm summer's afternoon, without accompaniment, save the music of the birds heard through the open windows of the author's rooms overlooking the beautiful garden of New College, Oxford, the old English ditty,
"Deck not with gems that lovely form for me,"
in which occurs the line,
"I must have loved thee hadst thou not been fair."

THE startled, ambushed, nightingales despair
 To match those notes, so tender sweet and low,
 That poured through lips where Cupid lays his bow
 Had made thee loved e'en hadst thou been less fair.

* This is the original form of the sonnet, published in the preceding number of NATURE, which, if perhaps superior to this in expression, is open to the reproach from which the original is free, pointed out to the author by his distinguished friend, the great Traveller and Orientalist (the translator, too, of Camoens sonnets), Sir Richard Burton, of deviating from the Petrarchian model by its sestet having one rhyme in common with the octave. In my

What need hast thou with gems to deck thy hair,
 Of aught of wealth Golconda's mines bestow,
 Rubies or pearls rash divers seek below!—
 Thou canst in nobler wise thy worth declare.
 Oft shall thy votary in his cloistered cell
 In deep research of Nature's secret clue
 Pause, to bid Memory with her magic spell,
 Bring back thy face and sweet girl-form to view,
 And in fond fancy hear thy voice anew
 Till life to gladness breathes its last farewell.

Athenæum Club, July 25.

J. J. S.

NOTES.

NEXT year there will be in Paris what promises to be a splendid Anthropological Exhibition under the auspices of the French Ministry of Public Instruction. It will be organized by Committees representing the Society, the School, and the Laboratory of Anthropology; and an appeal for aid has been addressed to all who are, or have at any time been, connected with one or other of these institutions. The Exhibition will include objects relating to all branches of anthropological science.

CAPTAIN JOHN ERICSSON, who retains much of his vigour and youthful activity, celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday at New York on Tuesday, July 31. The King of Sweden and Norway cabled

"Laws of Verse" (if I remember right) I have compared the octave and sestet of a sonnet to the body and the frame or bed of a carriage respectively. The effect of a rhyme common to the two may be likened to that of driving in a spike, which converts the previous springy connection of the two parts into a fixture. The much more common fault of English sonnets is the reverse of this, viz. that they contain too many distinct rhymes instead of too few. In the form-build of the two sonnets I may be said to have discovered a locknet artistically adapted to receive either one of two miniatures, each in its own way equally exquisite, and worthy of ineffable regard and adoration. I left the Subject of this week's sonnet at the door of Magdalen College Chapel to attend the evening service there, and early the next morning, as it now reads, with the exception of changes in three lines only, it was in the hands of her parents.

With regard to the punctuation of this and other of my poetical pieces, I share to a great extent the opinion of the late deeply regretted Matthew Arnold, that in poetical composition the fewer points the better: grammatical or (so to say) choristic points as such should never be introduced except when necessary to prevent ambiguity or obscurity of meaning: consequently there will be many points left out in poetry which would be found in the same piece written in prose. But *per contra* I hold that points are sometimes useful or even necessary in poetry which would not be found in prose, viz. to mark brief pauses or almost insensible musical rests. The pointing I have adopted in the line from last week's sonnet—

Thy flashing, rushing, fingers to indue—

affords an exemplification of this latter principle. The commas on each side of *rushing* are not choristic but melodic, and would not appear in prose.

In law writings no points at all are introduced, and for reasons which in no wise conflict with the principles referred to above.

1°. A law document is expected and ought to be written in such a form as to be insusceptible of an equivocal or doubtful construction.

2°. No one expects a law document (unless maybe it were a marriage certificate or deed of separation by mutual consent) to have much music in its lines.

One of the official readers of the sonnet contained in the last number of NATURE has written to me to say that he cannot see the sense of lines 3 and 4. The answer is, I think, obvious. In the human organism all parts, faculties, and powers are connected and correlated. Consequently a voice whose notes are pure, sweet, and true affords a voucher (I do not say mathematical proof, but presumptive evidence which may be accepted in the absence of rebutting facts) of the character to which it appertains being sweet, pure, and true. But sweetness, purity, and truth are the prime ingredients of goodness. Therefore notes which are pure, sweet, and true vouch for the goodness of the person to whom the voice belongs. Q.E.D.

The argument in the text is put in the form of an enthymeme, the major premise—*All persons whose singing notes are sweet, pure, and true offer a presumption that they are good*—being suppressed. It is notorious that birds instinctively, and therefore on the surest ground, infer the worthiness (or according to their ethical code the goodness) of their partners from their superiority in song. Witness the distaste from a sonnet familiar to many of my readers—

*Like foolish bird who in the fowler's cry
 Hears her loved mate's soft amorous melody*

If I am wrong in supposing so, I hope that Mr. Romanes, or any other biologist (if such there be) of equal skill with him in Darwinian dialectics, will set me right in this point, and inform the readers of NATURE on what other intelligible ground can be explained the recourse had to song by the male bird to win the affections of his mate. If such be the case with birds, why should it not be equally true of the sometimes scarcely less volatile portion of the human race?