

"we consider that the international character of the diagnosis will better be maintained: the Vienna rule be altered so as to read 'either a diagnosis in Latin or a recognisable figure.' This alternative would do away with the difficulty as to language, and would allow botanists to use their own language, provided they give a characteristic figure."

Prof. Seward has signed the second statement, and has added the following remarks:—"In view of the nature of much of the material available for investigation, I consider that it is undesirable to insist on a Latin diagnosis for all species described by palaeobotanists. In cases where a formal diagnosis is possible, such diagnosis and a figure of the specimen ought to be given, but for the present at least I am not disposed to bind myself to the publication of a diagnosis in Latin. It is, I believe, in the interests of the subject to avoid pledging oneself to any fixed rule as regards either a diagnosis or the language in which the diagnosis is to be written.—A. C. Seward."

Prof. Zeiller, of Paris, to whom a copy of the memorandum was forwarded, has signed the second statement mentioned above, and has kindly expressed his reasons for being unable to subscribe to the first. These are as follows:—

"M'étant, au Congrès de Bruxelles, rallié, dans un esprit de conciliation, à la disposition générale qui fait de la diagnose latine une obligation, je n'en persiste pas moins à penser que cette obligation ne devrait pas être étendue à la paléobotanique, l'application s'en heurtant souvent, avec l'état fragmentaire et incomplet des fossiles végétaux, à des difficultés presque insurmontables, notamment lorsqu'il s'agit d'échantillons à structure conservée ne montrant que des caractères anatomiques internes."

"J'émetts le vœu que tous les paléobotanistes s'unissent pour demander au prochain Congrès de leur laisser à cet égard la liberté dont ils avaient joui jusqu'ici, et à l'encontre de laquelle on n'a relevé aucun inconvénient.—R. Zeiller."

In conclusion, while, as we have seen, the British, American, and Scandinavian palaeobotanists have agreed to avoid the *general* use of Latin diagnoses for the present, it should be pointed out that the object of the memorandum mentioned above has been solely to ascertain the opinions and *present* intentions of workers on fossil plants in this respect. It is, of course, understood that those who have subscribed to the two statements quoted above are not in any way bound as to the future, and they are at perfect liberty if, in altered circumstances in the future, they should wish to depart from their present opinions and intentions to do so. The view is widely held that perfect liberty in regard to matters of nomenclature, as in other directions, is essential to the progress of our knowledge of fossil plants.

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Spitting Cobras.

THE following note may be of interest, the more so as the existence of cobras in Borneo is denied in a recent work on Borneo ("Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks"). In your "Notes" in NATURE of May 4 (p. 320) you refer to the "spitting cobras" of East Africa. The cobra of East Borneo also has the power of projecting its poison to a distance of at least 1 metre. In January of last year I was walking along a narrow jungle track about twenty miles from the coast, in lat. 1° 10' S., when I saw a cobra erect preparing to strike at me. I struck it about 30 cm. from the head and broke its back (as I thought). It then projected two streams of liquid at me as I stood over it. A Bugis close beside me exclaimed, "dia menumpit!" (menumpit=to shoot with the blow-pipe). One stream struck the lapel of my coat, but I did not notice where the other struck. I placed the dead (?) cobra on a tree, intending on my return to carry it to my camp and bottle it, but when I returned it was gone.

About two hours after the incident I felt an irritation on my skin, which lasted for some hours, and then gradually disappeared. There was a newly healed leech wound at the place, but I could hardly believe that the cobra venom could have penetrated thick puttees, trousers, and

socks all wet through. But I sent for the Bugis who had accompanied me, and without telling him anything, asked him to point out where the cobra poison had struck me. He immediately placed one finger on the lapel of my coat and another on my shin exactly where the irritation was.

He added that about ten miles away his brother had lost the use of his arm for three months because of a cobra which had projected its poison at him.

The cobra was black with a bluish sheen, but the throat was yellow. Estimated length, 1600 mm.

Boscombe, May 8.

T. R. H. GARRETT.

The Reform of the Calendar.

THE article in this week's NATURE on "Daylight and Darkness" leaves little to be said with regard to the so-called Daylight Saving Bill. Its adoption would indeed render us "the laughing-stock of the enlightened people of the world." No object, however good in itself, can be attained by a deceitful and underhand process, which must lead to many inconsistencies and misunderstandings. There is no reason why 12 o'clock should be the exact time of noon; in point of fact, it seldom is, as clocks must be regulated to keep *mean* time. But there is a very good reason, and it is of great importance, that the interval between two consecutive hours by the clock should be always exactly one hour. To regulate it otherwise would be deceitful and confusing.

My purpose, however, in this letter is rather with reference to Mr. Philip's letter on the "Reform of the Calendar." He denies that the week has had an unbroken continuance, because the paschal full moon on A.D. 31 (which he thinks was the year of the Crucifixion) fell on March 27, which was a Tuesday. Now the Jewish Passover had nothing to do with the day of the week, and might fall on any day, being regulated by the moon. That it fell in A.D. 31 on a Tuesday proves that that could not have been the year of the Crucifixion, which was probably A.D. 30, or possibly (as Prof. Sanday now thinks) A.D. 29. The seventh day of the week (the Jewish Sabbath) was the day after the Crucifixion, and the day after that, the first day of the week, the day of the Resurrection. Christians observed that day as their sacred day every week, and the Church decided (after the early Quarto-deciman controversy, settled by the Council of Nicea) to keep the Christian Passover (which we call Easter) always on that day of the week. There has, then, never been any break in the continuity of the week.

Blackheath, May 13.

W. T. LYNN.

The Rusting of Iron.

IN view of the correspondence which has taken place recently in NATURE on this subject, I should like to refer to the results of some further investigations which I have made in conjunction with Mr. J. R. Hill in continuation of those published in the Journal of the Chemical Society in 1905. In that paper, and in other previous publications, experimental evidence was brought forward to show that the rusting of iron can take place in the absence of carbon dioxide, contrary to the generally accepted view. Several chemists have addressed themselves to the task of defending the old opinion that carbon dioxide is necessary. Their arguments were summarised recently in an article in NATURE initialled "T. M. L." No exception can be taken to this article if its limitations are clearly recognised. It omits all reference to the large body of experimental work which has been published by Whitney, Tilden and others, in addition to myself, to show that the old view must be abandoned. The most recent work of Lambert and Thomson confirms this conclusion, whilst making an important addition to our knowledge of the conditions of reaction between iron, oxygen, and water when brought together in the most highly purified forms.

My object in writing this note is to state that I have now ascertained the cause of the inhibiting effect which certain substances, including alkalis and potassium bichromate, exert in preventing the rusting of iron, and it therefore becomes possible to explain a number of facts, including certain results which have been held to prove that carbon dioxide is a necessary factor in rusting.