Indeed, the green flash is often accompanied by strongly deformed images of the setting or the rising sun. Dr. Braak concludes that the green flash may be observed most frequently with a strongly notched limb of the sun. The occurrence of the distinct dip of the horizon at the time of observation of the green colouring of the surf agrees fairly well with these views. S. W. VISSER.

Weltevreden Observatory, Java, August 16.

Scientific Publication.

IN NATURE of September 8, p. 41, Dr. Brierley refers to a sore point of modern scientific workers, viz. the difficulties of scientific publication, and brings forward some, to use his own expression, "revolutionary" suggestions for overcoming these difficulties. I am fully convinced that Dr. Brierley's proposal to combat this evil by abandoning the practice of publishing in full works of scientific merit, deleting technical portions, and eliminating plates, and substituting for them summaries for the convenience of the "general scientific public," would prove to be a great hindrance to scientific progress if adopted.

Dr. Brierley's arguments for the adoption of this course are: (1) that the majority of papers have no permanent value in the advancement of science, and (2) that the special articles are not intelligible to workers in other branches of the same science.

It is very difficult to judge the value of scientific publications, and still more difficult to predict their possible value in the future. Mendel's paper, for instance, at the time of its publication in 1865, escaped notice, and could be termed "of no permanent value" by his contemporaries, but, as we know, it was "discovered" about twenty years later, and proved to be the foundation of the new doctrine of heredity. The truism that all scientific works, whether great or small, are the foundation on which the building of science is constructed stands good here.

It is highly important that all works should be published in full for the benefit of specialists all over the world, and not in "popular" form for the general scientific public, which will always find what it wants in general treatises and summaries. This would be impossible if, as Dr. Brierley suggests, the original memoirs were stored "in a kind of Somerset House for scientific records." Indeed, this would take us back to the Middle Ages.

The difficulties of scientific publication, however, are real, and I think that instead of *faire bonne mine à mauvais jeu*, as Dr. Brierley suggests, we should do our utmost to save the position and apply to the State for subsidy. We can surely afford to save our scientific literature, taking into account that scientific papers published in the whole country during one year are but a fraction of what is published daily in the Press in London alone. CECIL A. HOARE.

Behaviour in Lizards.

WE kept here this summer two common lizards (*Lacerta vivipara*), one a very active male, the other a female which was much less active because she was soon to give birth to a litter of young. One day I turned a batch of earwigs into the lizards' bowl, and a vigorous hunt ensued. When a lizard seizes any sort of prey it shakes it violently and repeatedly before swallowing it, thus incidentally advertising its success. At one moment it happened that the female was worrying an earwig when the male had none. He darted across and tried to snatch her earwig from her. She eluded him that time, but a few seconds later he tried again and succeeded. She made no attempt to get the earwig back; soon after he had swallowed it, however, she pounced on him and bit his elbow, tearing off a small piece of skin.

This was remarkable enough, since at all ordinary times these lizards never showed any sign of resentment—when, for example, one of them spread itself over the other in competing for a patch of sunlight. But about two minutes later something happened which surprised me still more. The female sighted an earwig sheltering half under a stone. Seeing the quick, purposeful turn of her head, the male ran up on to the stone and stood waiting. Neither moved for some seconds; then with a dart the female seized the male by the snout and held him for two or three seconds in spite of his struggles. The moment he freed himself she pounced on the earwig (which had not moved), and went through the usual actions of worrying, champing, and swallowing without further interference from the male.

On a cold day our lizards were scarcely more lively than newts. Temperature made all the difference to them. After half an hour of hot sunshine the male was as active and alert as a terrier; he would leap at flies and catch them in the air. This episode with the earwigs happened on a hot day, but even so it seemed to imply cerebral processes which one scarcely expects to find in such an animal as this small lizard.

E. LEONARD GILL.

Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, September 28.

Breeding Periods of Newt and Slow-worm.

ON September 27, when examining a ditch-pool which used to produce Hydra, I found a number of larvæ of the common newt varying in size from 11 to 20 mm., the smaller two-legged, probably less than two weeks old, the larger more advanced, with well-grown hind-legs.

The pool in question was dried up during the early summer, and until half an inch of rain on July 15 and 16 thoroughly wetted the ditches no newts could have bred there, although they were breeding in a deep quarry-hole within a hundred yards. We regularly obtain newt larvæ in July for class purposes, but the end of September seems unduly late.

Three possible explanations suggest themselves:—(1) The old newts in the locality have bred twice, (2) the spring-born newts have bred in late summer, or (3) newts belonging to the place in question have been able to hold up their spawn until favourable conditions occurred, which did not happen until the third week in July.

It would be interesting to have the observations of other naturalists on late breeding.

Last year, when the weather conditions were very different, slow-worms were late in breeding, gravid females occurring in the last week in September and newly hatched young in the second week in October.

RICHARD ELMHIRST.

Keppel, Millport, September 29.

The Highest Inhabited House.

I SHOULD very much doubt the accuracy of the statement in NATURE of September 15, p. 78, that a dwelling at 17,100 feet in the Andes is the highest inhabited house in the world. I feel confident that this can be claimed to be the case in the Himalayas, probably in the Karakoram or Ladak chains in the