

H.M.S. *Sealark* in 1905 always wore a pendant of black coral under his blouse, and all the black "boys" on board begged pieces from us "to keep them from drowning." Inquiries show, too, that black ornaments, bracelets, rings, and pieces strung into necklets are common on all coasts from Zanzibar to Singapore. They are usually described as wood, but, as it is stated that the ends overlap or that the bracelets or rings are spiral, they are probably of coral. A Japanese professor says that black coral is much valued in China and Japan, and largely used by coastal people for jewelry. Branched growths are not infrequently brought up on the hook when fishing

outside coral reefs, but, while there are frequent indications of local use, there is no regular fishery for such as an article of commerce.

Rheumatism would seem to be particularly a "charm" disease. All over England a potato is carried in the pocket as a remedy, and several ladies residing in Cambridge derive great benefit from the permanent presence of horse chestnuts below their couches. Rings of metal—tin in many parts of the West—are a regular specific. One of the black bracelets in question has a decorative value of its own. We wonder, however, whether the ladies might not find Chinese jade a still better specific.

Obituary.

J. M. DODDS.

BY the death of John Macalister Dodds on November 13 last Cambridge has lost a great gentleman, while many people, both inside his college and outside, have lost a most kindly, helpful, and amusing friend. He took his degree as fifth wrangler in 1881, and returned from Glasgow to Peterhouse as bursar and mathematical lecturer in 1884, since when he had resided in college continuously. He lectured, as usual, on November 12, and was found dead in his chair the following morning. Apparently the only published paper he was connected with was one on the value of the B.A. unit of resistance (R. T. Glazebrook and J. M. Dodds, *Phil. Trans.*, 1883).

On returning to Cambridge Mr. Dodds gave advanced lectures on the theory of sound for some years, in addition to his routine work, but henceforth his main interest lay in the theory of numbers, the theory of groups, and kindred topics. Particularly was he interested in the theory of numbers, and he worked at it incessantly. I have heard him say that he tended to lose interest when the continuous variable was introduced into that beautiful subject. Indications are not lacking that such feelings were shared by Gauss himself, but in reality the leaning of Mr. Dodds was towards ancient, simply stated, and difficult problems of a pre-Gaussian kind. He was extraordinarily astute, for example, in the application of Fermat's famous principle of infinite descent. Formal algebra, too, had a great fascination for him.

A word must be said of his generosity in working at a problem with a colleague; the algebraical avenue being left to him, Mr. Dodds was untiring

in his efforts until the inquiry became hopeless or the question was determined. One habit of his is probably now obsolete; each long vacation he made a complete set of solutions of the Tripos papers that had just appeared. Younger generations do not, I think, regard that as being any longer a task that provides mental exhilaration, even supposing the problems come out.

This is not the place to dilate on the wide knowledge of books and human beings that vast reading and irresistible social powers had given Mr. Dodds, yet no account of him can be complete without an allusion to what was, it may be, the most marked feature in his attitude on general questions. He was an intense and innate conservative; the smallest suggestion of change always seemed to arouse his instant opposition. As he was an acute dialectician, this might easily have become exasperating, but he was so big, so strong, and so laughingly good-natured that the almost inevitable did not happen. If he sometimes laughed at others, he often laughed at himself.

J. H. G.

WE regret to announce the deaths, on December 9, of LORD LINDLEY at the age of ninety-three years, and, on December 11, of LORD HALSBURY at the age of ninety-eight years. Both were elected fellows of the Royal Society under the special clause which permits the admission of members of the Privy Council—Lord Lindley on January 20, 1898, and Lord Halsbury on January 13, 1887. It may be recalled that Lord Lindley was the son of the late Dr. John Lindley, professor of botany in University College, London.

Notes.

ON Saturday, December 10, the Official Referee under Part I. of the Safeguarding of Industries Act gave his decision on the complaint that santonin has been improperly included in the list of goods upon which import duty must be paid. The drug is derived from flowers grown almost exclusively in Southern Russia and Turkestan, and is extracted by a simple process which does not appear to demand professional

skill; its application is medicinal as distinguished from chemical, but the evidence on the question whether it should be regarded as a "fine chemical" was most conflicting, and emphasised the difficulty which may be experienced in defining a "synthetic organic chemical" within the meaning of the Act. After two hearings Mr. Cyril Atkinson, K.C., expressed the view that the word "chemical" is not a scientific term, but implies a