

opinion respecting the corona could be made public. At present all that is generally known is, that he regards the corona as "an effect due to the passage of sunlight through our own atmosphere near the moon's place." Those are the words he used (see NATURE, vol. i., p. 14). I imagined that I had understood them. It seems I had not. Will he explain them, and perhaps indicate how the sunlight gets there? I only need to learn how one ray of sunlight can reach the atmosphere near the moon's place, during central totality in any considerable eclipse, and why the atmosphere actually at the moon's place (that is, all that cone of air which lies between the eye and the moon) is left free of this sunlight. This being satisfactorily explained, I should waive all other objections and accept the atmospheric glare theory without further question.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR

[Mr. Proctor should have quoted the context, in which Mr. Lockyer carefully refers to Dr. Frankland's and his own conclusion (or theory) "against any such extensive atmosphere as the corona had been imagined to indicate." He then states that the "conviction" that the corona is probably an atmospheric effect, "is growing stronger and stronger," if the negative evidence of the new method of observation were alone taken into account; but this is not to elaborate a theory.—ED.]

### The Horse-Chestnut

REFERRING TO NATURE, No. 37, your correspondent, Eugene A. Connell, has fallen into a mare's nest in the matter of the horse-chestnut.

Country people are well aware of the impression of the horse's foot he has discovered, but the coincidence is quite accidental, and has nothing to do with the name.

"Horse" is a very common prefix, denoting largeness or coarseness, in the same way that the prefix "dog" indicates inferiority and contempt. Thus we have horse-chestnut, horse-bean, horse-radish, horse-mint, horse-parsley, horse-leech, dog-rose, dog-violet, dog-berry (the berry of *Solanum nigrum*), &c.

These prefixes are common to nearly all languages; we have *ἵππο-κρημνος*, a horse-laugh, "fièvre de cheval," a violent fever, and a host of like terms.

Bath, July 27

CHARLES EKIN

### The "English Cyclopædia"

If the Editor of the "English Cyclopædia," in his letter contained in your issue of July 7, had restricted himself to defending his own handiwork, and had abstained from denying the correctness of my statements, I should not have ventured to ask for space in your columns to reply to him.

In opposition to my statement that I looked in vain for "*Arvicole*, *Crocidura*, *Crossopi*, *Hypudæi*, *Sorices*, shrews, and voles," the Editor asserts that "all the species mentioned in the Close Time Report are described or noticed in the Cyclopædia." This may be and probably is quite true. I merely asserted that they were not to be found under their respective names. I have stated that I found *Hypudæus* and the voles under the heading *Murida*. In return for my information he now tells me that if I wished to become acquainted with *Crocidura* and *Crossopus* I ought to have turned to the article *Sorocidæ*. But how is an unlearned reader like myself to know where to turn? The Editor only confirms the accuracy of my statement as to the great want of cross references. If the Index and the Supplement had contained such references as *Hypudæus* [Muridæ, E.C.], *Crossopus* [Sorocidæ, E.C.], &c., I should probably never have given public utterance to my troubles. In reply to my assertion that I looked in vain for an article on *Rhizocrinus*, I am told, much to my astonishment, that the proper place to find it is under *London Clay*. In my ignorance I had sought for it under its own name, *Apicrinites*, and *Encrinites*. According to this mysterious system of arrangement, if I had complained that there was no article on *Sparrows*, I should probably have been told that I ought to have looked for a notice of them under the heading *London*.

In my letter I gave a list of twenty-three important subjects on which there were no articles. In defence of these real or apparent omissions the Editor, after making the strange assertion that two of these, *Acclimatisation* and *Deep Sea Dredging*, belong rather to the "Arts and Sciences" than to the "Natural History" division, goes on to say that most of the subjects stated by me to have been omitted "do occur." He

must be well aware that I never asserted that they "do not occur." I simply said that there were no special articles on them. He might have had the candour to notice that I unearthed from their hidden recesses the subjects to which he expressly refers in his letter, viz., *Eophyton*, *Eozoon*, *Hyalonema*, and *Protoplasm*.

As I must not trespass further on your space, I will conclude by observing that I fully concur with the Editor in the opinion that "what a Cyclopædia ought or ought not to contain is an open question;" but when an Editor has the moral courage to assert, in illustration of the mode in which he discharged his functions, that "*Meloe* was inserted and *Sphexidæ* rejected, because there was not room for both," and gives no less than twelve columns to the former instead of dividing the space between the two; and when he tells us that *London Clay* is the proper place to seek for information regarding *Rhizocrinus*, the readers of NATURE may draw their own inferences as to what a Cyclopædia, under his superintendence, is likely to be.

I must add that I have not the slightest idea who the Editor of the Supplement is, and that until his letter appeared, I did not believe in his existence.

South Devon, July 8

NEMO

### Entomological Inquiries, etc.

I WAS much interested, two nights ago, at finding on the wall of my drawing-room a flattish, dark-grey winged insect, six or seven tenths of an inch in length, which, on being placed in the hand, exhibited two small but brilliant sparks of light towards the extremity of the tail. In the imperfect light in which it was examined, the wings seemed to have elytra and the body to be somewhat like a small caterpillar, with a tapering tail. In size and general aspect it resembled the Italian fire-fly, with which I made acquaintance last summer on the Lake of Como, without, however, a sufficient examination to justify more than the most superficial comparison. My knowledge of entomology is so defective, that I feel unable to form an opinion whether it might be that insect or the male of the common glow-worm (which, however, is not common in my neighbourhood). If so meagre a description may enable any of your readers to give me satisfactory information as to this point, I shall feel much obliged to them.

There is adequate evidence that some kind of fire-fly has been seen during hot seasons in England. Kirby and Spence give a reference, which I have no opportunity of verifying, to Phil. Trans. 1684, as to their appearance in Hertfordshire, and their having been considered the genuine *Lamproyris italica*. The following unpublished account may be interesting as having come to me from a perfectly reliable source: "In 1822—the year is pretty certain—during the month of June or July, the weather being very hot, on at least two evenings a number of fire-flies were seen at a village near the Thames, between Reading and Henley; they were flying about the fields and the lawn before a gentleman's house, and some of them came into the house; three or four or more might be seen at a time, like little flying lamps. The insect was brown [reference is then made to a sketch from memory thirty-two years afterwards, from which it must have greatly resembled my specimen], and seems to have had opaque elytra and network wings; the light was in the tail, like that of a glowworm, as bright, but probably not as large. A very intelligent gentleman who was upon the spot, an acquaintance of Dr. Wollaston's, who had been in America and the West Indies, was greatly astonished; he caught some of them, and considered them identical with the West Indian firefly. He said he had heard of their being in England, but never seen them."

A lady, whose experience must be referred to a later date than the foregoing account, has informed me that she once observed them for a single day in Wiltshire.

The newspapers of 1868 or 1869—I am not certain which—spoke of them as abundant in some places; particularly, I think, at Caversham in Kent, where they were even considered "nuisances!" if I recollect right. Some of the readers of NATURE may perhaps be able to furnish information as to this alleged fact.

There is something very remarkable in the occasional appearance of these beautiful insects in our climate. They can hardly be thought to reach us by direct migration. Can it be supposed—as it has been ingeniously suggested to me—that their ova are frequently being imported from warmer countries, but are only fully developed in the temperature of our hottest summers?