

visited by many of their fellow colonists, who, having cursorily examined them, fell to touching them with their antennæ on the abdomen, reminding me much of a mesmerist making passes over a victim. The effect was almost electrical. I was surprised to see the incapables at once begin to rally. After stretching their legs and moving their antennæ they moved along slowly for one or two steps and then went along as if nothing had happened. Others came and drank of the spirit not quite evaporated, but did not seem to suffer any bad effects. I buried a member of the community as it was in the act of carrying off a larva. Although many came and looked on none took compassion or attempted to relieve their friend. A small heap of larvæ, however, which I pressed down into the soft earth with my pencil, thereby injuring some of them badly, was disinterred, and every individual carried into a place of safety.

A stranger placed in the nest was very soon set upon, and before long its head was travelling in a direction opposite to that of its abdomen. The headsman's reward was a long draught of blood from the severed abdomen.

On my turning over the stone at first, the larvæ were exposed, but were soon begun to be carried off. Some of the workers were certainly busybodies, fussing about, pretending to do a great deal, while in fact they were shirking their fair share of the household duties. They would rush at the larvæ, seize one and be off with it in a great hurry, but they had not gone far (not even always in the direction of the entrance) before they changed their minds, threw down their load to return for another helpless infant, which was treated in the same way, being carried generally in a direction contrary to the previous, and dropped down anywhere, sometimes beyond the limits of the nest altogether.

My observations with regard to ants dropping intentionally or jumping from small heights do not quite agree with Sir John Lubbock's, but they are not yet full enough to give in detail. I hope to have fuller opportunities for the investigation of the habits of this most interesting class in the Malayan Archipelago, whither I am now bound.

Meantime I hope these few notes may have some interest for the readers of NATURE.

HENRY O. FORBES

S.S. *Celebes*, off Naples, October 18

Colour-blindness

HAS it been suggested that the traditional blindness of Homer may have been—in the absence among the ancients of a specific name for colour-blindness—*merely* the colour-blindness for which Dr. Pole makes out so good a case? To readers ignorant of Daltonism, blindness must have appeared the only explanation of a glaringly misapplied colour-epithet. It is at least clear that the author of the Homeric poems was not always blind in the modern sense of the word.

Brighton, November 1

CLEMENTINA BLACK

THE conclusion of Dr. Pole's valuable paper will doubtless stir up many to investigate the question whether or not dichromatism was the rule at an early stage of human vision.

Will you allow me to adduce, towards the solution of this question, the evidence of a literature, which though not nearly so ancient as the Greek, goes back further than that of many European nations. I mean the Irish. I find in some of the earliest works in that language an ambiguity in the application of adjectives of colour very similar to that noticed in the Homeric writings by Mr. Gladstone. *Glas*, for instance, is used, indifferently, apparently, for green, grey, and blue. *Uaithne* is used to indicate the colour of grass, and also that of the human eye. *Dearg* is employed to denote the colour of wine, and also that of clay. *Ruadh* (red) is similarly ambiguous.

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EDMUND MCCLURE

Carrier-Pigeons

IN NATURE (vol. xviii. p. 682) it is stated that carrier pigeons are being "turned to useful account" in a new direction in Germany, for Consul Ward writes to the Foreign Office "that the successful results attained by the establishment of communication between the two Eider lightships and the Port of Tönning, in

Schleswig, by these means has led to its organisation" elsewhere. This mode of communication is, however, not new, as carrier-pigeons were employed early in this century as a means of communication with the Bell Rock Lighthouse, as mentioned in my late father's "Account" of that work. The pigeons passed between the lighthouse and the shore—a distance of eleven miles in eleven minutes. The employment of these birds, however, was, I suppose, found to be more curious than convenient, for they have long since ceased to be employed. The pigeons were presented to the establishment by the late Sir Samuel Brown, R.N.

THOMAS STEVENSON

Edinburgh

Globular Lightning

AS the curious phenomenon known by the above name seems to be attracting some attention just now, I venture to send you the following details, which, though of rather ancient date, are still, owing to their startling character, very fresh in my memory.

I think it was in the year 1866, in the beginning of the month of August, that I was walking in the garden when the atmosphere became exceedingly oppressive (there had previously been a very long drought), and thinking by the appearance of the sky, which looked lurid and threatening, that a storm was coming on, I made for the house. As I was going up our front steps some rain-drops fell, which were the largest I ever saw. I had just reached the dining-room and was standing near the window, which looks north, when I saw a large ball of fire, which appeared to me, looking at it as I did from a distance, to be the size of a globe such as is used in schools, descend towards the earth. In descending it struck the church, which is immediately opposite our house, and brought with it a number of slates and part of a stone cross, making a terrific noise. There was a flash of lightning soon after, followed by a moderately loud clap of thunder, but nothing more. As there were not at that time any houses near to ours I did not hear the occurrence mentioned by any one. The noise, though extremely loud, was not at all like thunder. The illumination of the rooms by the ball of fire was seen by two other persons in the house.

CHARLOTTE HARE

St. John's Road, Putney, S.W.

Speaking-Trumpets

THE antiquity of the speaking-trumpet may be proved upon far higher authority than that of the imaginative Athanasius Kircher. It is literally as old as the Pyramids. While examining Lepsius's great work upon ancient Egypt for my "History of Music" I noted two examples among the plates of the fourth dynasty of Egypt (see Lepsius's "Denkmäler," Dyn. 4, Abt. 2, Blätter 27 and 30). The Egyptian speaking-trumpets seem to have been some five feet or more in length, and too wide in diameter to have been blown by the mouth. They are conical, and lack the contraction near the mouth-end which is so observable in their war-trumpets.

WM. CHAPPELL

Toughened Glass

MY own experience supports the necessity for caution in using Bastie's toughened glass. Shortly after its introduction I had some graduated measures, and although they were sufficiently tough to bear the shock consequent on falling five or six feet to the ground, yet after a time some short scratches appeared on their surface, and these rapidly spreading till they nearly covered the whole of the glass, when but a slight touch was sufficient to make the measure fly into fragments. One placed on a shelf subject to rather rapid change of temperature, without any handling or apparent cause, broke up suddenly into tiny pieces, behaving, indeed, as if it were a Rupert's bomb.

Northampton, October 29

G. C. DRUCE

POTTERY AT THE PARIS EXHIBITION

THE extensive collections of pottery at the Paris Exhibition brought together from so many countries, is of high interest from a technical, as well as from an