

*Seconda Contribuzione morfologia e sistematica dei Selachi.* Del Prof. Pietro Pavesi. (Genoa, 1878.)

IN 1874 Prof. Pavesi, of Pavia, described in the *Annali del Museo Civico* of Genoa a shark which had been captured at Lerici, in the Gulf of Spezia, in 1871. It belonged to the genus *Selache*, but, from a peculiarity in the conformation of the rostrum, Pavesi considered it to be a distinct species from the great basking shark, *Selache maxima*, and named it *Selache rostrata*. The specific difference of this specimen has, however, been called in question by Canestrini, Steenstrup, and other ichthyologists, who were inclined to regard it as a monstrous form of the *Selache maxima*. In June, 1877, a male shark, also belonging to the genus *Selache*, was caught in the harbour of Vado, near Savona, and, being examined by Prof. Pavesi, forms the subject of this second communication to the *Annali del Museo Civico*, vol. xii. Its length was between ten and eleven feet. It had been eviscerated before coming into his possession, so that the memoir does not give an account of the abdominal viscera, but the external characters, the skeleton, the pectinated appendages, the brain and cranial nerves, and the vascular system, are described. The shark from Vado is almost identical, says the author, with that previously caught at Lerici. He then carefully reconsiders the systematic position of these specimens. He is strongly of opinion that the view that the specimen originally described was a monstrous form of *Selache maxima* is quite untenable. But his examination of this second specimen has convinced him that these sharks can no longer be regarded as a distinct species, and that they are young examples of the great basking shark, *Selache maxima*. The memoir is illustrated by a lithographic plate and by twenty-seven woodcuts.

*Das Leben. Naturwissenschaftliche Entwicklung des organischen Seelen- und Geisteslebens.* Von Philipp Spiller. (Berlin: Stühr'sche Buchhandlung, 1878.)

THIS work may be said to be but an enlarged reproduction of a division of an earlier and more important work: "Die Urkraft des Weltalls nach ihrem Wesen und Wirken auf allen Naturgebieten," by the same author. Prof. Spiller, whose death it was our painful duty to announce last week, is the originator and founder of a philosophical theory on the first cause of all things. According to his view the world-ether is the architect of the universe as well as the fundamental cause of gravitation. In his works, particularly in the one just mentioned, the learned professor treats this world-ether theory in a most masterly manner, and whatever view we may take as to the correctness of his views—a question which we certainly do not wish to decide—it is only justice to point out that his explanations and definitions are all written in such a spirit of firm conviction of the truth of his theory, that an attentive reader cannot refuse his admiration and respect.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

[The Editor urgently requests correspondents to keep their letters as short as possible. The pressure on his space is so great that it is impossible otherwise to ensure the appearance even of communications containing interesting and novel facts.]

#### Leibnitz's Mathematics

I UNDERSTOOD Dr. Ingleby to say that he was prepared to make good his assertions, and to respond to Mr. Nelson's "call" as soon as I retracted, or justified, my former statement.

In 1871 Dr. Ingleby said it was exactly twenty years since the last vestige of presumption against the fair fame of Leibnitz was "obliterated."

Dr. Ingleby is evidently unacquainted with the work of Dr.

Sloman (Leipzig, 1858; in English, Macmillan, 1860), else he would not have spoken of the "last vestige of presumption."

Kant's opinion of Leibnitz, which is far more favourable than that of Dr. Sloman, compares him to chemists "who gave themselves out to be possessed of secrets, when they had really nothing but a persuasion and a conviction of their capacity for acquiring such." This verdict, from a true metaphysician, ought to have much weight with Dr. Ingleby.

P. G. TAIT

#### Guthrie's "Physics"

SOME weeks ago (p. 311) you published in NATURE a review by Prof. Maxwell of a little book of mine on Practical Physics. It is not my intention to complain in any way of the review, partly because it would be a profitless trespass on your space, but mainly because, while the tone is unfavourable, the instances adduced by the reviewer go a long way to confute his own statements in all cases where there is any connection between the two.

Some well-meaning friend has composed and sent me a copy of the inclosed. There appear to be various opinions as to the authorship. It has even been suggested that Prof. Maxwell, with that sense of humour for which he is so esteemed, and with a pardonable love of mystification, is himself the author.

FREDK. GUTHRIE

February 24  
REMONSTRANCE TO A RESPECTED DADDIE ANENT HIS LOSS OF TEMPER

Suggested by Prof. CLERK MAXWELL'S review of GUTHRIE'S "PHYSICS"

WORRY, through duties Academic,  
It might ha'e been  
That made ye write your last polemic  
Sae unco keen ;  
Or intellectual indigestion  
O' mental meat,  
Striving in vain to solve some question  
Fro' "Maxwell's Heat."  
Mayhap that mighty brain, in gliding  
Fro' space tae space,  
Met wi' anither, an' collidin',  
Not face tae face.  
But rather crookedly, in fallin'  
Wi' gentle list,  
Gat what there is nae help fro' callin'  
An ugly twist.  
If 'twas your "demon" led ye blindly,  
Ye should na thank him,  
But gripe him by the lug and kindly  
But soundly spank him.  
Sae, stern but patronising daddie !  
Don't ta'e 't amiss,  
If a puir castigated laddie  
Observes just this :—  
Ye 've gat a braw new Lab'ratory  
Wi' a' the gears,  
Fro' which, the warld is unco sorry,  
'Maist naught appears.  
A weel-bred dog, yoursel' must feel,  
Should seldom bark.  
Just put your fore paws tae the wheel,  
An' do some Wark.

$$d \sqrt{\frac{m}{n}}$$

#### Unscientific Art

IN *Punch's* series of cartoons, "the man at the wheel" turns up now and again. The most recent example is that of date February 22: John Bull and Punch are strenuously holding a steering-wheel between them, in a tempestuous scene. I have a second example before me in the series of cartoons of Beaconsfield recently issued, No. 61: Disraeli has one hand on a steering-wheel, while the other holds a pistol directed to the powder magazine below; and he threatens to blow up the ship if Gladstone and Bright (climbing over the bulwarks behind) step on board. Other cases will be remembered. Now (neglecting here the political meaning of the pictures) these steering-wheels are wonderful productions, and how they serve for steering is a mystery. The wonder, remarked on by St. James, of "a very small