

If it has been stated that the last branches of floating Sargassum are paler, more delicate, and more active in their vitality; I believe that to be no real observation, but only a supposition, for the more delicate and more branched ends become certainly pale at first, and with the diminution of chlorophyll can never increase their vitality. Does any one know in what time the olive-coloured broken Sargassum gets pale, and if pale Sargassum does really sprout to some extent, which I doubt, how long it continues to sprout? and further, after what time do the dead round air-vesicles of Sargassum break off? I should wish these questions cleared up by personal observations.

Leipzig-Eutritzsch, Germany

OTTO KUNTZE

### Remarkable Prediction of Cold

IN NATURE, vol. xxi. p. 48, in the Meteorological Notes, it is stated, on the authority of Mr. Glaisher, that the present unusually cold weather set in on October 27, 1878. You perhaps are not aware that this was predicted almost to the day by Prof. Piazzi Smyth in NATURE, vol. v. p. 317. In an article on Heat Waves he gives the dates of these phenomena as follows:—Years 1834'8, 1846'4, 1857'8, 1868'8, and 1880'0; the heat wave of 1880 to be preceded by a cold wave commencing 1878'8, which is, I need scarcely say, the end of October, 1878.

Dulwich, November 17

B. G. JENKINS

### The Lizard

LAST August, while superintending the burning of some dry bush in my pasture, I was surprised to see a ground lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) run up to the flames and stop on a bed of hot ashes. My little son who was with me endeavoured to turn it aside with a stick, but on his trying to do so, it darted into the fire and was soon consumed. This I thought at the time accidental, but later in the day we returned to the same spot, and in a few minutes a larger lizard of the same species deliberately ran up to the burning bush; it paused on the warm ashes wagging its tail to and fro, apparently enjoying the heat, when all of a sudden it darted into the flames, and like the first one was instantly a willing holocaust. I turned to the Negro, who was burning the bush, for explanation, but like most of his race he accepted the fact as a matter of course, remarking "lizard seem to love fire." My ideas went back to the legends of the salamander. The story of the French consul at Rhodes (M. Pothonier), who one day found his cook in a terrible fright thinking the "devil was in the fire," and when he looked into the bright flames, saw there a little animal with open mouth and palpitating throat, and on trying to secure it with the tongs, it ran into a heap of hot ashes. He secured it and gave it to Buffon, who found it to be a small lizard, whose feet and a portion of the body were half roasted. M. Pothonier first thought it was incombustible, having remained in the fire three minutes, but imagined that it might have been brought in with the fuel. Nicander, Dioscorides and Pliny, all allude to the fire-proof qualities of the "salamandra." Aristotle speaks of the salamandra's power of extinguishing fire with the copious secretion of saliva which it has the power of ejecting into the flames. As far as my own observation goes all lizards have the power of ejecting saliva. The Negroes have a dread of the croaking lizard's (*Gecko*) "spitting" at them. I do not believe that any Jamaica lizard has *poisonous* saliva, but that the saliva is deleterious, I am quite sure. That cats get "fits" from eating lizards is a well accepted fact, their hair falls out, and they become sick and droop, confirming the belief in the depilatory properties of the salamander's saliva. As Martial puts it (Lib. ii. Ep. lxi.):—

"Desine jam, Lalage, tristes ornare capillos,  
Tangat et insanum nulla puella caput.  
Hoc salamandra notet, vel sæva novacula nudet,  
Ut digna speculo fiat imago tuo."

Before closing these jottings, I should like to correct an error in a recent work on Natural History, in which it is stated that "the Iguana is extinct in Jamaica." This is not the case. They are still to be found in numbers on the Cashew trees in the lowlands, especially St. Catherine's. I once had a long fight in trying to pull a large one out of a hole in a tree, by the tail. He won the battle "by the skin of his tail."

Monatree, St. Andrew, Jamaica, W.I.,

JASPER CARGILL

October 14

### The "Hexameter," Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθή . . . κ.τ.λ.

It is surely no argument against Prof. Clerk Maxwell's notion, that in the epistle (James i. 17) the enclitic particle *τε* is omitted. Read, of course,

Πᾶσα δόσις τ' ἀγαθή καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον,

and the verse is perfect. The practice of omitting a word (or part of a word) necessary to the scansion of a verse is all too common with prosists quoting poetry. I give one example from an English writer. Robert Greene, the earliest to allude to Shakespeare, in his "Groatworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance" (1692), quotes, just as if they were prose, six lines from a contemporary poet; and in so doing inserts two words and omits two and part of another! He writes, as prose, omitting all that I here give in italics—

"Then only Tyrants should possess the earth,  
Who striving to exceed in tyranny,  
Should each to other be a slaughter-man;  
Untill the mightiest outliving all,  
One stroke were left for Death, that in one age  
Man's life should end."

I am pleased to learn from the obituary notice in NATURE of that great man, that Clerk Maxwell's thoughts during his illness reverted to a play of Shakespeare's; but had he less profitably thought of Greene's assault on Shakespeare, and had it struck him that the foregoing must be in heroic verse, what would be thought of the critic who should object to this, that the first and fourth of these so-called verses are, by one syllable each, too short?

Athenæum Club, November 22

C. M. INGLEBY

It cannot be supposed that our translators meant to compose a verse when they wrote the line which Longfellow transfers bodily into his "Evangeline":—

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

So the metrical cadence here may be quite accidental. Still I cannot think that the defect of quantity in the final syllable of *δόσις* is fatal to the idea that it may be a line from an early Christian doxology; especially when we suppose it written in Alexandrian or Hellenistic Greek. The arsis, or natural stress of the voice, would cover up the defect, especially in chanting; and it would scarcely be a defect at all to non-classical ears. The process which rapidly from the Christian era substituted stress or accent, as we now understand it, for quantity, seems to have been greatly accelerated by the hymns of the Church. In any case every trace of such quotations is of great interest to every student of the New Testament.

HENRY CECIL

Bregner, Bournemouth, November 22

### Unconscious Cerebration

I HAVE delayed noticing a communication, headed Unconscious Impressions, by Mr. C. J. Monro, in NATURE, vol. xx. p. 426. This refers to what Dr. Carpenter calls Unconscious Cerebration, but which when I discovered it likewise, I called Unconscious Thought.

With Mr. Monro's conclusion that an unconscious impression is stronger than a conscious one, his statement does not impress me, nor is it supported by my own experience.

My attention had been recalled to the subject by observing children, and in their actions it appears to me we may find the beginning of the process of unconscious cerebration. So far it appears that conscious cerebration precedes and lays the foundation for the unconscious process. When a baby is practising, as for instance in handling an object, its attention is closely given in the early stages and in its various experiments, and it is only after a time that the performance becomes purely mechanical.

The same is to be noted of young animals.

Hence I conclude that as various practices become habitual, and, as some style them, instinctive, conscious cerebration ceases to be employed. Thus is formed the habit of only regarding some objects consciously, and necessarily that of regarding others without cerebration. Thus I treat unconscious cerebrations as becoming habitual.

HYDE CLARKE

32, St. George's Square, S.W., November 20

### Mr. Thomas Bolton's Natural History Discoveries

I ONLY became aware on Saturday evening last, the 15th inst., of the paragraph kindly inserted by Prof. E. Ray Lankester,