

the support they give to the opinion that the diastatic property is connected with the degree of solubility of the albuminoid matter, and in the fact that this may result as well from the growth of an organism foreign to the grain as from the germination of the embryo itself.

R. W. ATKINSON  
College of Science, Newcastle-on-Tyne, September 19

#### Integrating Anemometer

PERMIT me to observe that the integrating anemometer devised by Mr. Shaw and Dr. Wilson, an abstract of whose paper, read before the British Association (Section A), appeared in your issue of September 15 (p. 467), is in principle and in several of its details identical with a machine intended for the mechanical reduction of anemograms of the Kew pattern adopted by the Meteorological Office, a description of which, with drawings, was placed by me in the hands of Mr. R. H. Scott, and by him transmitted to Prof. Stokes in February last. It is however to be noted that there is a fundamental objection to the mode in which such machines deal with the data submitted to them, namely this, that the air does not, in fact, move parallel to itself, as *these* integrators and Lambert's well-known expression assume that it does. In other words, the integrator should concern itself only with those particles of air which *are passing* the anemometer at each instant, *i.e.* with the directions and velocities of successive elements of the wind at a fixed point. Dr. von Oettingen (Wild's "Repertorium für Meteorologie," Band v.) has shown this.

CHARLES E. BURTON

38, Barclay Road, Walham Green, S. W., September 22

#### Red Rainbows

THE accounts in NATURE, vol. xxiv. pp. 431, 459, of pink and red rainbows induce me to mention one of a rose colour which was seen in this neighbourhood at sunset yesterday afternoon. Just before setting, the sun shone out with a pale golden glow, but about the north and east there was a general cloudiness, dark inky purple with light masses of cloud floating from north to south, and as the sunset glow lost its golden and assumed a ruddy appearance, these floating clouds took the same colour, the general cloudiness beyond retaining its purple character, and on looking north-east there was the rainbow, or rather the lowest part of the left hand of the bow, almost perpendicular, but inclining, of course, to the east; the general colour was rose, but along the inner side the prismatic colours were plainly seen. It lasted for about five minutes, and was seen by others who were just giving up shooting, about a mile from the house. The clouds in the west soon put on a stormy appearance, and rain began to fall.

A. TREVOR CRISPIN

Hyde End, Brimpton, Reading, September 23

#### Hay Fever

IN Mr. Hannay's letter on Hay Fever (p. 485) two facts are mentioned, *viz.*, that "those who are afflicted with hay fever are so owing to the tenderness of the internal lining of the nose," and that "in Scotland hay fever is practically unknown." By connecting these facts a probable remedy is suggested, *viz.*, the use of snuff. That this habit destroys the natural tenderness of the internal lining of the nose is evident from the insensibility of the snuff-taker to doses that furiously irritate the nostrils that have been differently educated. As Scotchmen generally are either snuff-takers themselves or descended from snuff-takers, a direct or hereditary insensibility may explain their immunity from this affliction. Not being one of its victims, I am unable to try the experiment, which should be started a few weeks before the season commences, in order to gradually develop the acquired insensibility.

W. MATTIEU WILLIAMS

Stonebridge Park, Willesden

IN NATURE (vol. xxiv. p. 485) Mr. Hannay remarks that "no remedy yet published will cure hay-fever." Has Mr. Hannay read Dr. Blackley's "Hay Fever" (Baillièrè, Tindall, and Cox, second edition, 1880)? It will be found that Dr. Blackley has used the treatment mentioned in NATURE, *viz.* the protection of the mucous membrane of the nose from pollen, with success both on himself and other persons subject to the fever, and Mr. Hannay's experiments offer another proof of the efficiency of this treatment. There is a short article on the

subject in the *Lancet* of July 16, p. 82, by Dr. Thorowgood, and another by Dr. Blackley in the *Lancet* of August 27, p. 371. Mr. Hannay's treatment is essentially the same as that published by Dr. Blackley, though in the latter the inconvenience of plugging the entrances to the nasal ducts, and of the stoppage of the proper air-passages, is avoided, whilst the mucous membrane of the eyes is also protected.

M. C.

September 24

#### Electric Light in Collieries

THE writer of the article in NATURE, vol. xxiv. p. 383, has overlooked the long account given in the *Times* of June 14, 1881, of the visit paid by the Accidents in Mines Commissioners to the Pleasley pit, near Chesterfield, where the first important application of the light was made nearly three months ago. Credit should be given to Mr. Swan and to Messrs. Crompton and Co., who for more than a year have been experimenting with, and perfecting, the lamps, &c., rather than to those who may have the good fortune to adopt that which the Pleasley trials proved to be so perfect; and, as one who was present with the Royal Commissioners, I think it only fair to call your attention to what is probably a slip in your report.

SESAMY

London

#### THE ORIGIN AND FUNCTIONS OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION

MY attention has been called to a pamphlet published by Mr. W. H. Harrison, purporting to contain a correct account of the first founding of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. I am sure that Mr. Harrison, in common with such other readers of NATURE as take an interest in the affair, will be glad to hear my father speak for himself upon a matter which Mr. Harrison, with the amount of information at his disposal, could only treat of as a subject of speculation. The paper which I inclose was addressed to Sir Edward (then Colonel) Sabine; and I think I may claim for it that it is written with much clearness and impartiality. You may perhaps also consider the letter of importance at this moment, as pointing out what was the view taken in those early days of the proper functions of the Association. The wisdom of this view is abundantly evident now that science has been so widely popularised, and that little more of real work remains for the Association beyond the just apportionment of its funds for scientific purposes. In respect to the numerous scientific letters addressed to my father by Buckland, Murchison, Smith, Sedgwick, Scoresby, Humboldt, Wollaston, Davy, Sabine, Faraday, Brewster, Babbage, Prout, Herschel, Whewell, Forbes, Liebig, De la Bèche, Lyell, and others, I hope some day to cause a selection of them to be produced, in a form which may be of interest, and perhaps of use to the public.

E. W. HARCOURT

Nuneham Park, Abingdon, September 23

*Account of the Formation of the British Association by the Rev. W. V. Harcourt*

"TO COLONEL (AFTERWARDS SIR EDWARD) SABINE

"I HAVE received from the President of the Philosophical Society of Hull (1853), where you know the British Association is about to meet, a memoir which he has put into public circulation descriptive of the nature of that body, its early history, and the specific services rendered to it by individuals.

"The task which Mr. Frost has undertaken is one of a difficult and delicate kind; and I was not surprised to find his description of circumstances with which he had no means of being intimately acquainted somewhat inaccurate and defective.

"Mr. Frost informed the public that when in 1831 Sir David, then Dr., Brewster, made proposals that meetings for promoting science by *réunions* of scientific men similar to those which prevailed abroad should be held in England and commenced at York, the country had been duly prepared and predisposed for such co-operation by the severe strictures which he had then recently passed on the actual state of science in this country, and on the conduct and character of its scientific institutions, and in