de Alwis, who was merely employed to make accurate copies of his brother's drawings, need not be brought forward; Mr. Moore was perfectly aware who made the original drawings from nature. It is satisfactory to know that the preface will contain an acknowledgment of the real artist, but common honesty requires his name to be printed on every plate that he drew instead of "C. F. Moore." HENRY TRIMEN

R. Bot. Gardens, Peradeniya, Ceylon, January 9

The Collection of Meteoric Dust—A Suggestion

IN the Report of the Committee on Meteoric Dust, given in your report of the last meeting of the British Association (NATURE, vol. xxiv. p. 462), Prof. Schuster refers to the difficulty "found in the determination of the locality in which the observations should be conducted," as there are but few accessible places sufficiently sheltered "against any ordinary dust not of meteoric origin. The lonely spots best suited for these observations are generally accessible to occasional experiments only, and do not lend themselves easily to a regular series of observations." As it is highly important that such a regular series should be obtained, and that such observations should be made in places "sheltered as much as possible" from dust of terrestrial origin, I venture to think that these conditions would be complied with by employing suitably constructed *captive balloons*, carrying the collecting apparatus at the highest attainable altitude. By this means we should have the great advantage of not only making the experiments abroad, but the observations might also be made from some hill-top in the north of Scotland, sufficiently far from any manufacturing town to insure the necessary freedom from dust of terrestrial origin. B. J. HOPKINS

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Colour and Sound

SOME weeks ago there appeared an account of a series of experiments connecting colour and sound; the following passage from Prof. Max Müller's Chips, ii. 104, may interest some of your readers:—"That Purûravas is an appropriate name of a solar hero requires hardly any proof. Purûravas meant the same as *πολυδευκής*, endowed with much light; for though rava is generally used of sound, yet the root ru, which means originally to cry, is also applied to colour, in the sense of a loud or crying colour, *i.e.* red (cf. ruber, rufus, Lith, rauda, O.H.G. rôt, rudhira, *ἐρυθρός*; also Sanskrit ravi, sun)." The following footnote occurs:—"Thus it is said, Rv. vi. 3, 6, the fire cries with light, *sokisbâ* râraptî; the two Spartan Charites are called Κλητά (κλητά, incluta) and *Φαεννά*, *i.e.* Clara, clear-shining. In the Veda the rising sun is said to cry like a new child (Rv. ix. 74, 1)—I do not derive ravas from rap, but I only quote rap as illustrating the close connection between loudness of sound and brightness of light."

Both Greeks and Latins seem to have used the same words for colour and sound, cf. *λαμπρός*, *λευκός*, *μέλας*, *σομφός*, *φαιός*, &c.; clarus, fuscus, candidus, &c. Probably not only colour and sound, but smell, taste, and touch had in early times the like words to express degree; even as we find aspera lingua and odor asper; and as we say "a harsh taste" and "a harsh sound." Tastes and smells will be found to suggest colours to the mind exactly as sounds do. If this be so, may not this apparently curious connection be explained as a sort of "*unconscious* philological memory?" KARL PEARSON

Inner Temple, January 28

On the Climate of North Northumberland as Regards its Fitness for Astronomical Observations

A LETTER in the last issue of NATURE (p. 317) upon the above subject, not altogether agreeing with the published records of this station, I should like to ask the reverend gentleman whether his observations were taken promiscuously; at stated times, or extending from sunset to sunrise. As the summary does not "tally" with the "weather at time" or "weather since taken" *without a break* during 1881 at 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. daily, I am afraid that a misconception will be formed as to the weather here by the readers of NATURE, and as this station is about 300 yards from Mr. Perry's observatory, there must be a mistake upon one side or the other, or probably the astronomical and meteorological definitions of "completely overcast" are different. JOSEPH LINGWOOD

Meteorological Society's Station, Alnwick, February 4

Parhelia in the Mediterranean

ON the morning of the 27th inst. a curious sight was witnessed at this place. I was sailing on the Mediterranean, and the day was hot and sunny. A slight haze came on, and about noon a large halo with an orange tint surrounded the sun. Shortly afterwards two mock suns appeared, one on each side of the ring round the central sun. They were also tinged with an orange colour, and appeared to have comet-like tails. Reflected in the still blue water they were even more distinct than when looked at direct, as the water cut off the sun's rays. This singular spectacle lasted more than an hour, and was seen by many. The boatmen predicted bad weather, but it has not yet come. All through January we have had brilliant summer days, with cold starlight nights—the minimum thermometer descending to 38° and 36° almost every night. I send you a very rough sketch of the mock suns. CHAS. H. ALLEN

Mentone, Alpes Maritimes, January

SIR ROBERT CHRISTISON

NOTWITHSTANDING his advanced age, the announcement of the death of Sir Robert Christison will be received with universal regret. He died on January 27, from the effects of a cold caught a month previously. Sir Robert's father was for many years Professor of Humanity in the University of Edinburgh, where the son was born on July 18, 1797. He attended first the High School, and subsequently the Arts Classes at the University. Having been well grounded in literature and general science, he turned his attention to medical studies, and graduated as Doctor of Medicine in 1819. Proceeding to the schools of London and Paris, in the latter city he became a pupil of Robiquet, the eminent chemist and *pharmacien*, in whose laboratory he worked assiduously, and, as he used often to say in after life, with signal advantage. Here, too, he is understood to have prosecuted, under the celebrated Orfila, that study of toxicology to which he had all along shown a special bent, and in which he was destined to achieve so important results. Shortly after his return to Edinburgh the young physician was, in 1822, appointed to the University Chair of Medical Jurisprudence, in succession to Dr. Alison. This post he occupied till 1832, when he relinquished it to assume the Chair of Materia Medica, rendered vacant by the death of Dr. A. Duncan, and for the clinical duties of which he was well qualified by hospital practice; while for its general work he had been thoroughly equipped by those old studies under Robiquet, followed up, in the interval, by diligent examination of every fresh pharmaceutical discovery.

Dr. Christison was able to give to the science of Medical Jurisprudence a precision it had formerly lacked, and thus contributed in no small degree to its practical development. Very important in this connection was the publication, in 1829, of his "Treatise on Poisons," which was received at the time by physicians, jurists, and men of science generally, as the most philosophical exposition of the subject that had ever appeared, and is even now regarded as a work of great value. From his position as Professor of Medical Jurisprudence, Dr. Christison was naturally called upon to act as an expert in criminal trials; and it was not long before his appearances in that capacity secured for him the reputation of a highly important witness.

In exchanging the Chair of Medical Jurisprudence for that of Materia Medica, Dr. Christison was, so to speak, confirmed in that line of chemical research for which he had all along shown special predilection. In the laboratory he was noted as a peculiarly neat and clean worker—a qualification of the utmost importance in prosecuting, for example, delicate toxological experiments. Nor was his exactitude greater than the earnestness and enthusiasm with which he followed out any inquiry to its ultimate issues. The well-known case of the Calabar bean,