

mute, who had never been taught to speak, could never rise higher than a brute, because he cannot picture "justice" or "edibility." But if we recognise the power to abstract the conception of roundness, justice, edibility, &c., then can be felt the want of symbols to represent them; just as a concrete thing, say, a tree, needs the word "tree" to stand for it. Instead, therefore, of considering abstract ideas as an "attempt to conceive a reality-in-thought answering to certain of our symbols," I would completely reverse the process, and make speech itself as the outcome of our power of making abstractions objects of thought, i.e. not only can we be conscious of what is white, as a dog also can, but we, and we alone, can be conscious of whiteness; and just as the symbol "white" is invented to stand for the concrete, so "whiteness" is the symbol invented to stand for the abstract.

GEORGE HENSLOW

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An Insect Attacking a Worm

MR. E. LAWRENCE'S letter in this week's NATURE reminds me that, walking, now many years ago, on a very hot and bright summer's day, I saw a huge earthworm crawling across the hard-beaten and sun-baked highway. What has brought you forth at such a time? I asked, and speedily got my answer. For, coming nearer, I found the larva of some beetle holding on obstinately by the poor worm's tail. I had not leisure to wait the result; and indeed, although here memory does not help me, I may have interfered on behalf of the worm, and so failed to witness anything corresponding to Mr. Lawrence's interesting experiences.

Even although such encounters as that witnessed by him may be but rarely visible, I venture to believe that earthworms very often fall victims to predaceous larvæ. Those of the Caribidæ and other predaceous beetles are common enough, that of the well-known ferocious being, the "rove-beetle" (*Staphylinus olens*), for example. The singular pointed tail-appendage of its larva, supposed to assist locomotion, may have a more important use. Turned to an acute angle with the body, it may effectually help the larva to hold its place in a worm-hole against the efforts of its prey to escape from its jaws. And only when the captured worm is very powerful may it be able to come to the surface of the ground, dragging its relentless foe along with it. Such, indeed, was the worm I saw, which had thriven well in the rich meadow-land bordering the Portobello Road, near Edinburgh, copiously irrigated with town sewage, and famous for its fertility. It was the largest I remember ever to have seen, to the best of my belief at the time not less than a foot long, while its assailant might be about an inch only, more or less.

WILLIAM SWAN

Ardchapel, Dumbartonshire, October 6

YOUR correspondent, Mr. Edwin Lawrence, is mistaken in supposing that the worms of England enjoy immunity from attacks such as he witnessed at Laqueville. I saw, in North Devonshire, in the last week of July, 1882, an incident precisely like that which he narrates. The insect I should judge from his description was identical. What particularly impressed me was its enormous strength, for the earth-worm, which was a large specimen of its kind, must have had at least twenty times the bulk of its adversary, and yet the insect, seizing upon the middle of the body, dragged it by main force a distance of three or four inches. It was cunning as well as strong; for when it found that the corpse, dragged loopwise from the middle, met with considerable resistance from the stiff wiry grass, it seized hold of the head, brought it round over the middle, and endeavoured to drag the worm lengthwise between the opposing stalks. I watched the attack for some time, and then removed the insect with my stick to a distance to see if it would find out the worm again, but in doing so I unfortunately injured it. When I first saw it the worm could still crawl, though feebly, but at the end of the attack it was quite motionless.

HERBERT RIX

Science Club, Savile Row, W.

MR. WALLACE, of Tynron, Dumfriesshire, related to me an incident which he was witness to, a few months ago, so similar to that related by your correspondent, Mr. Lawrence, that I called his attention to the communication of the latter. The worm Mr. Wallace observed, was attacked by the same kind of caterpillar-like animal, the difference being that after much

twisting and wriggling, about two-thirds of the worm broke away and escaped, leaving one-third in the enemy's possession, upon which it seemed to settle down for the purpose of a meal.

J. SHAW

Chiasmodon Niger and Notacanthus Rissoanus

IF the "singular fish of a deep black colour, with small eyes, and a most abyssal physiognomy," noticed by Prof. Giglioli (NATURE, vol. xxv. p. 535) had been a *Chiasmodon*, that learned ichthyologist would doubtless have recognised it, and not suggested that "it may be allied to *Malacosteus*." But in addition to the two specimens of *Chiasmodon niger* referred to by Mr. Johnson (NATURE, vol. xxvi. p. 453), it may interest ichthyologists to learn that a third specimen has been found off the New England coast (on the Le Have Bank). Like the others previously known it had engorged a fish several times larger than itself. The specimen is now in the U.S. National Museum. *Chiasmodon*, it may be added, is not at all related to the Gadidæ, as has been supposed by Messrs. Günther and Johnson, but is a true Acanthopterygian fish and the type of a peculiar family—the *Chiasmodontidæ*. [In Dr. Günther's "system" it belongs to the heterogeneous family *Trachinidæ*.]

With respect to the *Notacanthus rissoanus*, for which a new generic name has been proposed by Prof. Giglioli, permit me to state that prior designations have been suggested. In fact the genus has now received five names, viz.: (1) *Campylodon*, Günther, prov. name, 1861 (not of Fabricius, 1878, and not defined); (2) *Polyacanthonotus*, Bleeker, 1875; (3) *Zanotacanthus*, Gill, 1876; (4) *Paradoxichthys*, Giglioli, 1882; and (5) *Teratichthys*, prov. name Giglioli, 1882.

THEO. GILL

Smithsonian Institution, Washington; September 18

PROFESSOR HAECKEL IN CEYLON¹

VI.

IN his walks through the Singhalese village, of which he preserves so many pleasant memories, Prof. Haeckel was particularly struck with the comparative rarity of the weaker sex, especially of girls between 12 and 20 years of age.

"The greater number of children playing in the streets were boys. Girls are early accustomed to remain inside the huts and employ themselves in household work. Besides this, they develop very young, being often married at 10 or 12 years old, and old women at 20 or 30. Grandmothers of 25 to 30 are very frequent. A further significant fact is the permanent disproportion of male and female births among the Singhalese. The average is 10 boys to 8-9 girls. This fact is connected, to some extent at least, with the curious institution of polyandry. In spite of the efforts made by the English Government to suppress this custom, it maintains its ground, especially in the more remote districts of the Island. It is not unusual to find two or three brothers with one wife in common, and ladies may be found the happy possessors of 10 or 12 husbands. These complicated family arrangements form the theme of many extraordinary stories; but it is very difficult to distinguish fact from fable on the subject. . . .

"The Singhalese have a passion for music and dancing, and practise both arts according to a standard of taste very different from our own. Their principal instruments are the drum and the tom-tom, vigorously belaboured with wooden drum-sticks; besides these, they have reed-pipes, and a very primitive stringed instrument of one string. My evening calm was often broken in upon by the din of these ear-splitting instruments, and if I followed the sound to its source I was sure to find, in front of a fire under a palm tree, a group of ten or a dozen naked brown fellows, gaily painted with white, yellow, or red stripes, and indulging in the most extraordinary antics. A circle of spectators stood round, and followed the grotesque performance with devout attention.

"At Christmas time (the Buddhist New Year) these evening 'devil-dances' are more frequent, and partake

¹ Continued from p. 503.