

THE canal which it is proposed to make, connecting the Mediterranean and Red Sea *via* the Dead Sea and Gulf of Akaba, will, if carried out, throw considerable light upon the theory discussed by Mr. J. Starkie Gardner in your issue of August 2 (p. 323). The low-lying area which this scheme would submerge occupies the greater part of the Jordan Valley, and extends some distance to the south of the Red Sea, where the depression is at least 1300 feet. If there is any truth in the theory which ascribes elevation and depression to the denudation of rock from one area and its accumulation upon another, the introduction of such an immense weight of water from the Gulf of Akaba into the Jordan Valley will cause considerable subsidence in its vicinity. To what extent this would be the case it is difficult to say, but even a slight subsidence would much facilitate the cutting of the Mediterranean end of the canal.

Derby, Mill Hill, August 4 R. MOUNTFORD DEELEY

"The Speke and Grant Zebra"

ABOUT four months ago I wrote Mr. Joseph Thomson, the explorer who was selected by the Royal Geographical Society to examine the snow-clad mountains in Eastern Africa, and I requested him to look out for the "Speke and Grant" zebra mentioned in NATURE of April 26 last by Sir Joseph Fayrer, and I have had the following reply from Mr. Thomson, dated Mombassa, June 6, 1883:—

"With regard to your two questions I am happy to say that I can give you satisfactory answers.

"Within the last month I have seen hundreds of zebras, and I have shot three—one female and two males. The ground colour is *white* and the legs are striped to the hoofs. Of these facts I am certain, but to make quite sure I shall take care to note their characteristics in detail on my return. I did not know it was a subject of dispute."

The subject of dispute referred to is that the French zoologist, M. Milne-Edwards named a zebra after the President of the Republic, *E. Grévy*, which appears to be no other than the animal which we shot twelve of in 1860-63. J. A. GRANT
19, Upper Grosvenor Street, W., August 10

The Fisheries Exhibition

THE allusion that you made to the marine invertebrates in our department led one of your scientific readers immediately to examine them. He was surprised to find them properly arranged, classified, and named, with a few exceptions. All the alcoholic specimens were looking bright and beautiful. The specimens of the marvellous Alcyonarian of British Columbia, *Osteocella*, Gray, or *Verrillia Blakeii*, as it is called by those who have sent it, are in a state of perfect preservation. They are not so well accommodated as I could wish, owing to their great length, 6 or 7 feet; still they are to be seen very distinctly, doubled up in a glass jar, 3 feet 5 inches in height, filled with strong alcohol clear as water. The fine specimen of *Cryptochiton stelleri*, collected and contributed by His Excellency the Marquis of Lorne, was also found by your reader to be properly exhibited in a convenient glass jar, and labelled inside and out. The large and interesting collection of marine invertebrates exhibited by the Government of the Dominion of Canada is formed of collections contributed by the Museum of McGill College, Montreal, Laval University, Quebec, and from the Nova Scotia Provincial Museum. The collection of Edible Mollusca was made by the late John R. Willis, of Halifax, N.S.

Canadian Department, I.F.E.,
August 7 D. HONEYMAN
Canadian Commissioner

Birds and Cholera

ALLOW me to relate an anecdote in point. I was with a regiment, to which at the time I belonged, in Mauritius, when that bright and beautiful isle was desolated by Asiatic cholera in the year 1854. It was the subject of common remark that during the prevalence of the epidemic the Indian Minah-bird or starlings—"martins" they used to be called in the island—abandoned, or seemed to abandon, the main barrack square and other open spaces they were wont to frequent in the neighbourhood of Port Louis, and were nowhere to be seen. These birds had been imported from India many years before, and were protected as destroyers of certain insect pests in the sugar-canes. They were correspondingly tame in their habits. Presently they betook

themselves to the forest or Grand Bois, remaining in the centre of the little island; they could not have left by sea. They reappeared, or seemed to us to reappear, when the sickness passed away. Mauritius was then one of the stations where meteorological observations were systematically recorded. I rather think that the disappearance of the birds from the haunts of men during the epidemic and their reappearance when it ceased were duly noted by the Colonial Meteorologist, the late Col., then Lieut., A. B. Fyers, Royal Engineers, in his report. At any rate, I distinctly remember his noting another circumstance, viz. that the decline of the cholera mortality in the island, which was sudden and marked, was coincident with a marked change in the electric condition of the atmosphere at Port Louis, as indicated by the pith-ball electroscope.

I venture to suggest that the collection and investigation of trustworthy meteorological data during the prevalence of epidemics and of collateral information bearing thereupon has not yet received as much attention as it deserves from observers outside the medical profession. H. M. C.

August 10

M. Wolf's New Apparatus

THE short abstract given in NATURE (p. 336) of the *Comptes rendus* for July 23, contains a mistake in respect to M. Wolf's paper "Sur un appareil à l'étude des mouvements du sol." It is stated that M. Wolf's apparatus involves the same principle as that by which my brother and I magnified the displacements of the vertical. This is not the case, since he uses an ingenious arrangement of reading by reflection from mercury. In the abstract in NATURE "sol" has been translated "sun" instead of "soil." G. H. DARWIN

Trinity College, Cambridge, August 9

Double Shadows

ONE cloudless evening lately, while walking on a hillside near the southern shore of Loch Etive, Argyllshire, facing the setting sun, I observed each member of our little company cast a double shadow on the upward slope of the hill; first, the usual complete, well defined shadow cast in clear sunshine; and second, a longer fainter shadow of the upper part of the figure, extending for some distance in the same line beyond the first. The explanation was not far to seek. The loch beneath us was perfectly calm, and reflected the sun's disk with dazzling brilliancy. The second shadow was evidently produced by the reflected rays, thus:—



The phenomenon must be of frequent occurrence, but I do not remember seeing it noticed. I should add it was only observable for a few yards at a particular part of the hillside; a little higher or a little lower it ceased to be visible—doubtless because in the one case the reflected rays fell short, and in the other passed overhead. D. B.

Glasgow, August 2

Regnard's Incandescent Lamp

HERR VON PETERSEN, the engineer of the Zoological Station in this town, recently having occasion to use a powerful light, took advantage of the apparatus described in NATURE (vol. xxvi. p. 108) under the name of Regnard's Incandescent Lamp. He used the apparatus figured and described in NATURE, but neither with air forced through petroleum or benzine, nor even with gas forced through the same liquids, could he raise the platinum wire cage to more than a dull red heat, and the flame was never more brilliant than an ordinary Bunsen burner. The experiments were repeated several times with slight variations, but always with the same result.

I have written this letter at the request of Herr von Petersen, as you do not generally publish communications in a foreign language. ARTHUR E. SHIPLEY

Stazione Zoologica Napoli, July 26