not remember to have noticed the cirrus cloud in more than one instance. The sunsets have been subject for remark in quite a number of the papers." I inclose also a newspaper, the *Olive Branch*, of Hancock, Minnesota, U.S.A., which has been forwarded to me by another correspondent, containing a notice of the sunset of November 10.

Richmond, Surrey, December 22 F. A. R. RUSSELL

IN a letter dated Tokio, October 3, describing a tour in the interior of Japan, Prof. James Main Dixon writes :—"During the two or three days at the end of August we enjoyed fine dry weather, but the sun was copper-coloured and had no brightness. It was capital weather for travelling, but rather inexplicable. When we got to Nikko, the people came to us to inquire if some catastrophe were impending, for the appearance of the sun foreboded evil. We laughed at their fears, and assured them all was right. However it seems that if the appearance of the sun foreboded no evil, it was a wonderful sign of the greatest earthquake and volcanic catastrophe on record. The fearful explosion of Krakatoa, in the Straits of Sunda, took place on August 26, and there seems little reason to doubt that the monsoon had carried the volcanic dust along with it, the dust obscuring the sun. The distance is nearly 3000 miles."

LEWIS CAMPBELL

St. Andrews, December 22

Peripatus

DR. VON KENNEL, in a note on the "Development of Peripatus," which appeared in a recent number of the *Zoologischer Anzeiger*, and has been translated and printed in your columns, has thrown some doubt on the accuracy of the observations recorded in the late Prof. Balfour's memoir on the "Anatomy and Development of *Peripatus capensis* (*Quart. Journ. Micro. Sci.*, April, 1883). We trust that you will give us, as the editors of that memoir, this opportunity of making a few brief statements in reply to the somewhat unusually outspoken criticisms contained in his preliminary note.

Dr. von Kennel entirely omits to mention in his paper that Prof. Balfour's researches refer to a Cape species of Peripatus (*P. capensis*), whilst the species which he has worked at are West Indian, and differ considerably from *Peripatus capensis*.

Considering the fact, well known to embryologists, that there are numerous instances of great discrepancies in the embryonic history of closely-allied forms, it seems to us strange that the only explanation, suggested by Dr. von Kennel, of the differences between his results and those recorded in Prof. Balfour's memoir should be that the latter are absurdly erroneous.

The remarkable attitude which Dr. von Kennel has assumed in this matter must have been obvious to all competent zoologists. We offer these remarks mainly because his statements have appeared in a journal which has a wide circulation amongst readers who are not so well able to judge of the merits of the case.

We are able to state in conclusion that the results enumerated on pp. 256, 257 of Prof. Balfour's memoir have been confirmed by Mr. Sedgwick on a large number of fresh and well-preserved embryos of Peripatus from the Cape, obtained since the publication of the memoir. H. N. MOSELEY

A. SEDGWICK

[THE translator of Dr. von Kennel's "Note on the Development of Peripatus," to whom we submitted the above letter, writes to us that, "though with a large experience in such matters, he is quite unable to see anything 'unusually outspoken' in Dr. von Kennel's criticisms; had any such occurred, he would have passed them over; nor does he find any foundation for the statement that Dr. von Kennel explains the results of Prof. Balfour's memoir as 'absurdly erroneous.' Dr. von Kennel, at the beginning of his note, only asserts that his observations *cast some doubt* on those of Balfour, apologetically adding that his material was immensely richer than Balfour's, and at the conclusion of his Note he simply calls attention to the discrepancies between his observations and Balfour's illustrations." At the translator's request we quote the original of the two critical paragraphs with the translations, so that the many competent zoologists who are amongst our readers can judge whether the latter adds to or takes from the spirit of the former.—ED. NATURE.

"Ich thue dieses hauptsächlich deswegen, weil die durch Moseley und Sedgwick publicirte Abhandlung aus dem Nachlass Balfour's einige Abbildungen von Embryonen und Schnitten durch solche enthält, deren Genauigkeit ich nach meinem reichlichen und ausgezeichnet conservirten Material und nach den Beobachtungen am frischen Objecte etwas anzweifeln muss, deren Deutung vollends die Probe nicht hält."

' do this chiefly because the treatise published by Moseley and Sedgwick from the posthumous notes of Balfour contains some representations of embryos and cross-sections of the same, upon whose accuracy in details I, with my rich and well-preserved collection of specimens, and observations on fresh objects, must cast some doubt, and the interpretation of which does not bear investigation."

"Ich enthalte mich hier, um nicht weitläufig zu werden, jeder Discussion, muss jedoch noch einmal darauf hinweisen, wie wenig Balfour's Abbildungen und die Schilderungen der Herausgeber mit den hier mitgetheilten Thatsachen stimmen."

"I here abstain for the sake of brevity from all discussion, but must, however, call attention to the fact how little Balfour's illustrations and the descriptions of the Editors agree with the facts as they are here given."]

A New Rock

DURING my visit last summer to Lake Sagvand, in the Balsfjord, near the city of Tromso, I discovered a new enstatite-bearing rock, which forms entire little hills. It is composed of light yellow-green enstatite, mixed with magnesite. The magnesite, which is entirely free from lime, is partly white, partly dirty grey in colour, in which latter state it contains a little oxidulated iron, and appears then distinctly crystalline, with rhomboidal planes of cleavage. The rock is greatly interspersed with little grains of chromite, which are found in the enstatite as well as the magnesite. Here and there small grains of pyrite also appear. The substance is perfectly free from olivine, at all events neither olivine nor serpentine has been discovered under microscopical analysis.

The rock must be considered a new petrographical species. I have named it "Sagvandite," from the place where it was first discovered. It appears with a strong reddish-brown colour on its uneven surface, where the magnesite is completely washed out, so that the enstatite alone remains. The rock is not slaty, and must so far be said to be of massive structure.

When I have had an opportunity of thoroughly analysing the new substance, I propose to give a complete description of it in NATURE. KARL PETTERSEN

Tromso Museum, Finmarken, Norway, December

Diffusion of Scientific Memoirs

IN his notice of the Reprint of Prof. Stokes' papers in NATURE for Dec. 13 (p. 145), Prof. Tait, with characteristic incisiveness, speaks of the "almost inaccessible" volumes of the *Cambridge Philosophical Transactions*, and proceeds to offer an "easy cure" for that simple though grave malady. I think if Prof. Tait had taken the trouble to make the inquiry he would have found that very few societies are so liberal in the free dissemination of their publications, and that the number of universities, prominent societies, or libraries which do not receive them gratis, or merely in exchange, is very small.

December 14 W. M. HICKS

THE question so pointedly at issue between Mr. Hicks and myself is one which can be settled by statistics only. NATURE would do a real service to science by collecting statistics as to the *numbers* of different centres (home, and foreign, separately) at which the *Transactions* of various scientific Societies were freely accessible in 1883 (say); and also the corresponding numbers in 1853. The Royal Society regularly publishes such information in its *Transactions*, so does the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

I have been a Fellow of the Cambridge Philosophical Society for about 30 years; and, during that time, I have received from the Society some fasciculi (of *Proceedings* only) certainly not amounting to a dozen in all :—and I am not aware that my case is an exceptional one.

Mr. Hicks writes as if he thought I was bringing an accusation. Surely the figure, of *malady*, which I was careful to employ, cannot be so construed. P. G. TAIT