Cerastium semidecandrum (Little Mouse-Ear Chickweed)
,, *triviale* (Lesser do.)
Arenaria tenuifolia (Fine leaved Sandwort)
Pimpinella saxifraga (Com. Burnet Saxifrage)
Pastinaca sativa (Wild Parsnip)
Torillis anthriscus (Upright Hedge Parsley)
Senecio vulgaris (Com. Groundsel)
,, *sylvaticus* (Mountain do.)
Crepis virens (Smooth Hawk's Beard)
Hypochæris radicata (Long-rooted Cat's Ear)
Taraxacum dens-leonis (Dandelion)
Veronica hederifolia (Ivy-leaved Speedwell)
,, *polita* (Gray Procumbent do.)
,, *agrestis* (Green do. do.)
Lamium purpureum (Red Deadnettle)
,, *album* (White do.)
Rumex crispus (Curled Dock)

River Thames—Abnormal High Tides

IN a letter in NATURE of November 2, 1882 (p. 6), I gave a review of exceptional tides from 1860, and attempted to trace the causes thereof; it appeared that from 1860 to 1868 inclusive the computed maximum rise above "Trinity Standard" of high water for spring tides was 6 inches, and the actual range excess was 3 feet 6 inches above that standard.

From 1869 to 1882 the greatest computed elevation at high water was 2 feet 1 inch, and the maximum rise 5 feet above "Trinity" at Westminster, viz. on January 18, 1881, and again on October 28, 1882, the same height was attained—in each case resultant on a great north-east gale. On November 14, 1882, the afternoon tide marked 2 feet 5 inches above "Trinity," or 2 feet 4 inches above computed height—resultant again on a north-north-east gale. Since then, during the last thirteen months, there have been no very exceptional tides until last springs.

The following abstract table gives the more salient results for the present year:—

High Waters referred to "Trinity"

1883		Computed	Observed	Difference	Wind
		′ ″	′ ″	′ ″	
Jan.	22 p.m.	... 0 7 below	... 1 0 above	... 1 7	... E.N.E.
,,	24 ,,	... 0 2 above	... 1 6 below	... 1 8	... S.
Feb.	9 ,,	... 1 6 ,,	... 1 6 above	... Equal	... W.N.W.
,,	12 ,,	... 1 1 ,,	... 2 6 ,,	... 1 5	... S.S.W. to S.[2]
,,	13 ,,	... 0 1 ,,	... 2 0 ,,	... 1 11	... W.S.W.[1]
Mar.	12 a.m.	... 2 0 ,,	... 3 8 ,,	... 1 8	... N.N.W.
April	21 p.m.	... 0 6 below	... 1 0 ,,	... 1 6	... E.N.E.
June	8 ,,	... 0 5 above	... 1 6 ,,	... 1 1	... E.N.E.
Sept.	3 ,,	... 0 6 ,,	... 0 6 below	... 1 0	... W.S.W.[2]
,,	5 ,,	... 0 2 ,,	... 1 6 above	... 1 4	... N.N.W.
Oct.	1 ,,	... 0 2 ,,	... 1 6 ,,	... 1 4	... N.
,,	4 ,,	... 0 1 ,,	... 2 0 ,,	... 1 11	... N.N.W.[2]
,,	16 ,,	... 1 2 ,,	... "Trinity"	... 1 2	... W.S.W.[2]
Nov.	5 ,,	... 1 1 below	... "Trinity"	... 1 1	... W.N.W.
,,	6 ,,	... 1 9 ,,	... 0 6 below	... 1 3	... W.[2]
,,	19 ,,	... 0 1 ,,	... 1 6 above	... 1 7	... W.
,,	29 ,,	... 0 8 ,,	... 0 8 ,,	... 1 4	... S.S.E.
,,	30 ,,	... 0 5 ,,	... 1 0 ,,	... 1 5	... W.
Dec.	1 ,,	... 0 3 ,,	... 1 9 ,,	... 2 0	... N.N.W.
,,	12 midnight	0 5 ,,	... 3 6 ,,	... 3 11	... W.N.W.[2]
,,	16 a.m.	... 1 1 above	... 3 8 ,,	... 2 7	... N.[1]

[1] A gale. [2] A great gale.

It will be observed that in the majority of cases northerly winds accompany or have preceded the exceptionally high tides; also how a great westerly gale blowing down the river depresses the range of tide. The most remarkable result is that attendant on the great gale of the 12th inst. during last springs, for although high water level was less by 18 inches than in January, 1881, and October, 1882, it was exceptional for its great rise over the computed elevation, being no less than 3 feet 11 inches above the height denoted in the Admiralty tide tables with the reservation before named in my former letter, that the computed heights are for London Bridge. The high water of October 28, 1882, was 3 feet 4 inches above computed height; but the very remarkable tide of January 18, 1881, was actually 5 feet above the estimated range, which was only level with "Trinity Standard." The afternoon tide of Sunday, the 16th inst., was also, it will be seen, very much increased by the northerly gale then prevailing. J. B. REDMAN

6, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W., December 19, 1883

Deafness in White Cats

REFERRING to the note in your issue of December 13 (p. 164), by Mr. Lawson Tait, on "Deafness in White Cats," I should like to state, if my remarks may not be out of date, that my father kept a breed of deaf white cats over several years; and on making an inquiry regarding these cats of my brother, who now lives in Reading, but who at that time was resident with my father on a farm in North Hampshire, he informs me that the deaf cats were all white with blue eyes, with one single exception, and that one refers to an aged mother who was named "Deaf," on account of her infirmity, and who had eyes of different colours, the one being "red," or pink, as seen in white rabbits, and the other blue. So remarkable was the appearance of this cat that the eyes often attracted the attention of visitors, and my brother has more than once related to me a circumstance which I should not mention here, save that it so thoroughly bears on this question as one of fact. On one occasion a neighbour, remarking on the ocular peculiarities of this cat, elicited from my father the jocular reply that "she had one eye for the rats, and another for the mice." My brother further states that these deaf cats were all females, and that the breed was preserved on account of its furnishing "good mousers." I apprehend that this characteristic may in some measure be attributed to the character of the eyes enabling the animals to see better in obscure light. Males were not preserved, because they became rovers and destroyed the game. When any of the offspring were pied, or otherwise coloured, they were not deaf. Bearing on this, and evidently referable to my brother's early associations, he once observed, in his walks round Reading, a white cat with blue eyes sitting at a cottage door, and on inquiring he found that the animal was deaf; but he made no observation as to whether it was male or female. JOSEPH STEVENS

Oxford Road, Reading, December 24, 1883

Teaching Animals to Converse

I HAVE read with interest Sir John Lubbock's communication (p. 216), but I would like to know whether any precautions were taken to find out whether "Van" selected the right card by his sense of sight or by scent? This could have been easily done by changing the card for a facsimile which had not been previously scented. A more thorough test would be to employ a set of cards with "Food" written on one side of each and some other word on the other, then putting the cards in cases with an opening exposing one word only. The cards could then be put in a row and be kept in the same relative position, the changes for the experiments being made by turning the cards in their cases. Would it not be simpler to commence with drawings on the cards instead of words. For instance, a saucer or biscuit for "Food," a bone for "Bone," a hat for "Out," &c.?

Hanover, January 5 J. S. B.

On the Absence of Earthworms from the Prairies of the Canadian North-West

AN incidental allusion is made by Mr. Christy in NATURE of the 3rd inst. (p. 213) to Darwin's statement that earthworms "abound in Iceland." In 1881 I spent several weeks in that island, and had occasion many times to search for worms as a bait for trout and char around Thingvalla, Ori, the Sog River, &c., and could not obtain them except near the farmhouses—which are at great distances from each other—and absent altogether from the interior of Iceland, which is uninhabited and a desert. RICHARD M. BARRINGTON

Fassaroe, Bray, Co. Wicklow, January 4

Merrifield's "Treatise on Navigation"

I BEG to thank your reviewer of my book for the suggestions he has made in NATURE of December 20 (p. 169), and should like to point out to him that he must have overlooked some remarks contained therein, when he says:—

"We regret that Mr. Merrifield has omitted from the chapter on Traverse Sailing the warning given by Raper, that, especially in high latitudes, the difference of longitude should be found on each course," &c., by Mercator's sailing.

Will you kindly allow me to remark that I mention this twice in my book? First, on pp. 88, 89 I say, "Middle-latitude sailing should not be used in (*a*) high latitudes; (*b*) when the difference