sary to admit so great an elevation of the reflecting matter above the earth, and thus remove a serious difficulty in explaining the glow by known causes.

In no case here has the sun during the day or at setting appeared green. On December 28 and January 13 Venus has appeared a beautiful green through the complementary crimson. This fact became important only when it was discovered that the green remained after the crimson had disappeared. The light of the planet was struggling through some medium invisible to the eye, but which arrested the other colour.

Another important point. The glow has been seen without the slightest trace of cirrus clouds behind it. Three times faint ribbon-like stripes of cirri appeared in the first glow, but in the second the gorgeous crimson has generally been projected against the clear blue sky.

The writer has seen no notice of observations on the appearance of the sun and sky during the day, and especially the afternoon, before the brilliant sunsets.

The peculiar appearance of the atmosphere in the vicinity of the sun attracted his attention on the day the first remarkable sun glow occurred. The sky was perfectly clear except around the sun, which was embedded in a soft haze that extended out some 6° or 8° on every side. Yet a distant boundary could not be assigned to the haze, so gradually did it shade into the blue of the sky. The sun was obscured so that the eye could look at it for a moment and outline its disk. Covering the sun with the hand the haze adjacent glowed like a furnace, the light diminishing rapidly as the eye swept outwards.

Two or three remarks, naturally spring from this appearance. 1. The haze was not an ordinary cirrus cloud. It had no distinct bounding surfaces; it was invisible everywhere except near the sun. 2. There was, of course, no more of the matter forming the haze around the sun than elsewhere. 3. It was capable of reflecting intensely the light that fell upon it at a large incident angle, nearly 90°. 4. The reflection of light in a high degree by any substance at a large incidence would indicate a liquid. But the clearness of the sky showed the absence of condensed vapour. And yet there was something in the air around the sun—and no more there than anywhere else—which was then, some three hours farther east, flinging its gorgeous crimson over earth and sky, and which, three hours later, would drape the earth and sky of the observer in the same beautiful colours. And what was that something? That is doubtless the great question, and I can only echo, What was it? If the answer be "Vapour of water in some peculiar state," then it is wondrous strange that water, subject as it always has been to almost every conceivable change in the air, should rarely if ever before have assumed this peculiar state! Besides, the prevalence of this phenomenon around the globe, manifesting the same characteristics everywhere, requires some marked and probably unusual cause.

As to the volcanic theory, it has some good points. It gives an unusual explanation for an unusual occurrence.

It might be expected that a convulsion which would engulf islands and mountains, and send the throbblings of ocean around the globe, would leave some tokens of its presence on the more sensitive air.

The difficulty of accounting for the suspension of solid particles for months in air of extreme rarity may be avoided by admitting the effects to be due mainly to gases ejected in the eruptions. Most of these being condensable by extreme cold would occupy definite strata and not rise to an extreme height.

The sinking of Krakatoa and the admission of sea water to the awful and fiery gulfs below, would, it seems, set free immense quantities of chlorine from the salt water. As this gas is readily absorbed by pure water it may have condensed around its molecules the vapour of the air, and thus become capable of reflecting the light in a higher degree.

Of course these are suppositions, consistent as far as we know with law; and they may stand among other probabilities till clearer light confirms or rejects them.

In a communication to NATURE, December 13, p. 149, Prof. C. Piazz Smyth advances the idea that one of the conditions of the red sunsets was the *dryness* of the lower atmosphere. The hygrometric condition of the air here on the days the crimson sunsets were seen, is given in the following table, taken from the monthly reports of the writer to the U.S. Signal Office. The two columns give the mean temperature of the dry and wet bulb thermometers (F.) for three observations each day, at 7.32 a.m., 2.32 and 9.32 p.m.

Dates	Dry bulb			Wet bulb		
November 27	...	...	29	...	...	26.8
December 5	...	...	40	...	...	38
" 9	...	...	36.6	...	...	32
" 10	...	...	36	...	...	33
" 25	...	...	29.5	...	...	26
" 28	...	...	23.6	...	...	22.2
January 13	...	...	37	...	...	33
" 17	...	...	23.2	...	...	21.2

A mere inspection of the table shows that the dew point was high, and the percentage of possible moisture in the air quite large. Whether this weird and beautiful play of colours around the dying day is due to watery vapour in the air time will show; here it has certainly not been due to any deficiency in the vapour of the lower strata.

O. N. STODDARD

Wooster, State of Ohio, United States, January 18

Unconscious Bias in Walking

THE following little experiment seems to show that if the majority of people are, as Mr. Darwin argues, left-legged, they would circle to the left in a mist, as Mr. Larden says they do. I would call myself normal, my left leg being the stronger. That is to say, like the majority, I jump from the left, rest my weight standing on the left (a glance at a photograph album shows this to be normal) and generally cross my right over my left whilst sitting. Having put myself in a dark empty room, I could not satisfy myself as to which way I circled, there not being space enough, but when I artificially lamed myself by putting a few tin tacks in my slipper, I circled strongly in the direction of the sound foot. From what had been said in NATURE on the subject at the time, I expected the for-the-time-being longer and stronger limb to circle round the other. The fact seems to be that there is a bias towards the stronger, most-leant-upon limb, irrespective of length. It is worth noting that, if the object causing pain be placed under the inside of, say, the right foot only, the experimenter will lean on the outside of that foot and circle to the right.

In the matter of left-leggedness I have requested several right-banded people to feign lameness. Every one of them has limped with the right foot; and, on being asked to do so, has found difficulty in imagining the left lame, and acting as if it were. May it not be because the right leg is somewhat weaker than canes are carried in the right hand?

But although left-leggedness *quâ* strength seems normal, the reverse seems to hold good *quâ* skill: one pushes a door to with the right, feels his way down a dark stair with the right, kicks a football with the right. A friend of mine, a skilful athlete, particularly known as a jumper, at first expressed astonishment that there should be any doubt as to the left leg being the stronger. On reflection he added: "I'm not sure, however; figures in skating are easier on the right." This nine figure-skaters out of ten will assent to. It is to be expected, if my theory is correct. The right leg is more easily controlled, guided, and kept in position—in a word, the more skilful limb; and at the same time the left being the better kicker, the impulse is better given.

It seems to me that mounting a horse from the near side is not a mere fashion (except for the left-handed minority). The stronger leg is put in the stirrup and gives the lift, whilst the more skilful leg is thrown over the animal's back.

It would be interesting to know which foot it is, if any in particular, which Indian servants use for prehensile purposes; also whether the higher quadrumana are right or left hind-handed.

I have noticed that persons walking in the street dwell longer on the one foot than on the other, and I remember once arguing that in-toed persons with a rolling gait were the only people who were not lame. I have been trying to observe this seriously for some days, and believe it to be so, but as the mind naturally invents a beginning and an end for a continuous motion it may be imagination.

W. G. SIMPSON

5, Randolph Cliff, Edinburgh, February 6

The Ear a Barometer

THE phenomenon described by my friend Mr. Boys, on p. 333, is pathological, and not physiological. He is clearly suffering from slight obstruction of the Eustachian tube, a canal which leads from the inner side of the tympanic cavity into the posterior fauces. Its natural relief is, as he very accurately describes, by