

An Abnormal Starfish

A FEW weeks ago I dredged, off the north end of Arran, an interesting specimen of *Porania pulvillus*, Gray (= *Goniaster templetoni*, Forb.). It is rather more than 5 cm. in diameter, and one of the five short rays (that opposite to the madreporite), when viewed from the aboral surface, is seen to be distinctly bifurcated about 1 cm. from its termination. On examining the oral surface, it is found that the ambulacral groove of the abnormal ray divides into two branches at a distance of 2 cm. from the edge of the mouth. One of these branches runs along one of the forks of the ray to its extremity without further complication, but the other branch, belonging to the second fork, divides again 2 mm. from the first bifurcation, so as to form two tracts, which unite with one another 3 mm. further on, thus inclosing a small piece of the ordinary integument in an ambulacral area. Finally, this ambulacral area divides once more close to the tip of the ray. Consequently, there are three bifurcations of the ambulacral area in a space of not more than 1 cm. in length. As there are no signs of injury or disease on the specimen, the abnormal condition seems to have been caused by a tendency to dichotomous division like that seen in the rays of Crinoids and of the Astrophytidæ.

W. A. HERDMAN

University College, Liverpool, October 9

Peculiar Growth of the Common Acorn-Shell

A PECULIAR mode of growth of the common acorn-shell (*Balanus*) is met with at Hastings. These crustaceans are known to attach themselves sometimes by a shelly basis to rocks, &c. In this instance they seem to have worked together to form a common shelly tube, as seen in the accompanying life-size figure; still overcrowded, they have also lengthened their outer valves, thus spreading themselves out like the umbels of certain plants, as



many as fifty individuals being sometimes borne on one of these tubes. The columns supporting the pier are completely covered with them up to high-water mark. Except a comparative few of a later generation which—as will be seen in the figure—have attached themselves to the tube, and are in the normal condition, they all appeared to be dead, but of this I am not certain.

FRANCIS P. PASCOE

I, Burlington Road, W., October 18

Lunar Rainbow—Halo round the Sun in Connection with the Storm of October 15 and 16

ON the evening of the 9th there was a good lunar rainbow between 7 and 8 p.m. I have not seen one for some years, although about twenty years ago in one winter I saw seven or nine, I forget exactly which.

On the 14th, while coming home between 3 and 4 p.m., I saw a remarkable halo round the sun. I had intended making a sketch of it, but when I arrived there was pressing business, and when I was disengaged it was gone.

The halo was nearly a complete circle, but somewhat pressed in at the sides. Inside, there was a dark mass with a hard defined edge, with the least trace of faint mock suns at the left and right hand lower edges of the circle; outside, the sky was remarkably clear, of a greenish-blue colour. The evening and up to midnight was very hot, which was succeeded first by heavy rain, then wind that lasted for over forty-two hours; during this time there was considerable heat; afterwards for about six hours it was fine, to be succeeded by heavy rain, and cold; this afternoon (October 17) is fine, with half a gale blowing. I should have mentioned that after the halo the aneroid went down as low as 28.3.

Ramelton, co. Galway

J. H. KINAHAN

Mimicry in Snakes

I BEG to remark with reference to Mr. W. Hammond Tooke's letter on mimicry in snakes (*NATURE*, October 7, p. 547) that I stated a case of mimicry in snakes in the year 1869 (see also *Proceedings of the Zoological Society*, 1870, p. 368), and that I recently published a short paper on Adeniophis, which again treats the case.

A. B. MEYER

October 9

The Gale

IT may be worth mentioning as a curious coincidence that three of the most violent gales of recent times occurred on very nearly the same date of the year, namely:—

Sunday, October 14, 1877.

Saturday, October 14, 1881.

Friday, October 15, 1886.

The first of these was the most destructive in its effects as regards this district.

W. F. DENNING

Bristol, October 16

Adam's Peak

WITH reference to the "Adam's Peak shadow" I may perhaps mention the following fact:—While at Saas Fee (Canton Valais, Switzerland) this summer, we noticed more than once that the shadows of the Dom and its neighbours stood out clearly defined in the atmosphere. They were manifestly thrown on the cloud and mist that were suspended in the air at the time. The phenomenon was in this case witnessed from below.

Cheltenham, October

W. L.

THE MARINE BIOLOGICAL STATION OF BANYULS-SUR-MER

YESTERDAY I had the pleasure of visiting the "Laboratoire Arago," or Marine Biological Station of Banyuls, being the second institution of this sort founded by M. Lacaze-Duthiers in connection with the College of the Sorbonne. I found it in full working order, the session, which lasts here from October to June, having just commenced. The building is placed at the western point of the little bay on which the fishing-village of Banyuls is situated, just beyond the *Établissement des Bains*, and consists of three stories. The ground floor is one large *salle*, containing basins which are abundantly stocked with marine animals, and is open to the public for inspection as an "aquarium." The lighting of these basins appeared to me to be particularly good, and the collection contains many Mediterranean forms not to be seen in our northern latitudes. The first floor contains the working-rooms, library, and museum; the upper floor contains the apartments of the Director. In M. Lacaze-Duthiers's absence the institution is under the charge of M. Henri Prouho, whose official title is "Préparateur au Laboratoire Arago."

The fauna of Banyuls is probably not nearly so rich as that of Naples, but the advantages to English students would be, the nearer access (twenty-six hours from Paris) and the much more healthy situation.

If I understand rightly, the subvention awarded to the "Laboratoire Arago" by the French Government considerably exceeds that proposed to be given by the Treasury to our new Biological Station at Plymouth.

P. L. SCLATER

Port Vendres, Pyrénées Orientales, October 15

KEW GARDENS

THE well-known scientific traveller, Dr. Schweinfurth, has recently paid us a visit in England. The *Berliner Tageblatt* of September 12 reports his impressions of our botanical institutions as given in a lecture delivered the previous day before the "Versammlung deutscher Naturforscher und Aerzte." We extract the account of the National Botanic Garden at Kew. Some trifling