

sented to me by Dr. Barbosa Rodriguez, appeared in NATURE more than a year ago (vol. xxxv. p. 343). Dr. Rodriguez published a note on that specimen in the *Jornal do Commercio* of Rio de Janeiro for October 15, 1886. I state this as his note might easily be overlooked, not having appeared in a scientific periodical.

The last specimen received was caught at Autaz near the Madeira River in September 1887; it came, Dr. Rodriguez writes, from a mud-pool, whence it issued forth wriggling on the mud during rain-storms. My friend received it dead and in a state of incipient decomposition; he did all he could to insure its preservation, but when it reached me all I could save was the skeleton and portions of the skin and tougher muscles. These I have put in strong alcohol for future study. This specimen is considerably smaller than the one previously received, being, as far as I can judge, about om. 400 millim. in length.

At Autaz this fish is called *Trayra-boia*, or *Turum-boia*; the latter name is onomatopœic for *Turum*, which expresses the grunt made by the fish, and *boia* means "snake." On the Rio Mahu, an affluent of the Rio Branco, Dr. Rodriguez tells me that the name of this fish in the Makuchy dialect is *Aramô*.

HENRY H. GIGLIOLI.

Royal Zoological Museum, Florence, May 22.

### Dreams.

MR. R. L. STEVENSON, in his "Chapter on Dreams" in *Scribner's Magazine* for January last, brings forward one difficult point that must have puzzled many dreamers besides himself. The point is that the dreamer is often in the position of an ignorant onlooker, who, only when the plot or story is complete, sees the drift and motive of the different incidents that have been enacted before his eyes by what Mr. Stevenson calls "the Little People who manage man's internal theatre."

Perhaps it is one step further on in the puzzle to have the interpretation only vouchsafed to one after awaking; and the following example may be of some interest.

Much of my dreaming goes on in the form of reading; and it once happened to me to awake while looking at the outside of a pamphlet I dreamt I was holding. I saw it vividly enough before me; it had a mud-coloured cover, and the title was printed on it in plain Roman capitals: "Food, or the astrology of every day." "But this is nonsense," I thought; until, still having a vivid view of the title before me, I observed that the rough brown paper had been rubbed up after the word "the," and that there was a wide gap between it and the "astrology." Evidently a letter was missing, and I at once conjectured that the word had been printed "gastrology." But this I did not arrive at till I was wide awake.

I come back to Mr. Stevenson's query, "Who are the Little People?" and how comes their amazing independence of their employers? E. H.

### Strange Rise of Wells in Rainless Season.

A HOUSE near Fareham, standing in its own grounds, is principally supplied with water by two wells, about 16 feet deep. They are usually quite full in winter, and gradually empty before autumn. Owing to the small amount of rain last winter, the beginning of March found the wells with only 3 feet and 2 feet of water respectively: when, after a continuance of north-east wind, *without rain*, but with half a gale blowing, the water in these wells rose 14 feet and 12 feet.

Can you or any of your readers explain this mystery? There is a tradition in the neighbourhood that it is customary with the wells in the district to rise with a heavy gale even without rain; and a similar phenomenon has been observed before by my informant. E. H.

May 23.

### Milk v. Lightning.

IN Emin Pasha's letter published in NATURE (vol. xxxvii. p. 583), the Sudan Arabs are said to have a superstition that fire kindled by a flash of lightning cannot be extinguished until a small quantity of milk has been poured upon it. A similar belief seems to have existed formerly in this country. The earliest register-book of this parish contains the following note:—

"In the year of our Lord 1601 and upon ye 14 day of May beinge thursday ther was great thundringe and lightninge and ye fyer descendinge from heaven kindled in a white-thorne bush growinge neere to a mudd-wall in Brook-street westward from Thomas Wake his house, it burned and consumed ye bush and tooke into ye wall about on yeard then by milke brought in tyme it was quenched and it did noe more hurt."

JOHN CYPRIAN RUST.

The Vicarage, Soham, Cambridgeshire, May 23.

### The Renewed Irruption of *Syrrhaptis*.

MR. SCLATER having requested me to contribute to *The Ibis* an account of the present visitation of *Syrrhaptis* similar to that which I compiled for that journal in 1864, I would ask for information on the subject to be sent to me, and especially cuttings from foreign newspapers, the name of the publication and the date being always indicated thereon. I must add that I do trust my task will not be the unpleasant one of merely recording senseless slaughter. In 1863 the species bred both in Denmark and in Holland. There is no reason why it should not, if unmolested, breed this year in many parts of Britain. The visitations of 1872 and 1876 were of insignificant proportions, but that of the present year would seem to be of considerable magnitude, and sanguine hopes might be entertained as to the result if the malign influence of the "collector" could be neutralized or withstood. ALFRED NEWTON.

Magdalene College, Cambridge, May 27.

### "The Shell-Collector's Hand-book for the Field."

AS your reviewer (NATURE, May 17, p. 51) has shown that the little book which bears the above title is certainly worth a large share of "powder and shot," I may, in all fairness, be allowed to reply to those strictures made by him which are the most unfair, and which I consider warrant a reply from me. In the first place, it is quite apparent that he has never used the "Authenticated British List" published by the Conchological Society, where he would have found *Clausilia parvula*, *C. solida*, and *Zonites draparnaldi* excluded, doubtless, on reliable authority; while *Bulinus Goodallii*, *Vertigo tumida*, and *Planorbis dilatatus* are included, also, doubtless, on reliable authority, as recognized members of the British fauna, even if they be "casuals." He has also, it is quite apparent, never read Prof. Macalister's "Introduction to Animal Morphology," where he will find it stated on p. 286 that "the operculum has always more conchiolin in its composition than the shell whose mouth it closes." He does not know, it is also quite apparent, that *Pisidium* and *Sphaerium* are British fresh-water mussels, and *siphonated* British fresh-water mussels too, there being one siphon in the former and two in the latter genus (cp. the description of these genera in Westerlund's "Fauna of Sweden and Denmark"). He can scarcely know that the epiphragm has been called by some authors (as instance Macalister) the *clausilium*; and although recognizing this on p. 5 of my "Hand-book," I have described in a footnote to the genus *Clausilium* (p. 44) the only structure which we recognize to-day under that name. He does not know, it is evident, that Prof. Milnes Marshall ("Practical Zoology," p. 106) states that "the periostracum or outer layer is horny and uncalcified. To it the colour of the shell is due," and that "the middle layer" "is densely calcified, and has an opaque porcellaneous appearance." And he scarcely knows that in Huxley and Martin's "Course of Elementary Instruction in Practical Biology," p. 274, the aperture of the shell is spoken of as the *peritreme* and not as the *peristome*, and that in the majority of works on comparative anatomy it is also solely mentioned under that name. I think it also my duty to tell your reviewer that the teeth-formulae were not copied from Lankester, as he supposes, but from Woodward, and that upon comparison I find the copy correct (cp. Jeffrey Bell, "Comparative Anatomy and Physiology," p. 136).

In the second place, with regard to those other strictures which I can characterize by no other name than *mere whims*. It is a mere whim, for instance, to consider *Anodonta anatina* as a variety of *A. cygnea*, since such has never yet been generally recognized. It is a mere whim to believe that *Achatina acicula* should be *Cacilianella acicula*; *Bulinus acutus* should be *Helix* (*Cochlicella*) *acuta*; *Zonites* should be *Hyalinia*, and I had rather remain with my old system of nomenclature than get so