but serving to promote the oxidation of the sulphurous oxide at a temperature considerably below that at which sulphuric oxide decomposes when heated. The action of surfaces generally may well be of this character, and the converse influence they so frequently exercise is probably an effect of the same order.

I have elsewhere raised the question whether there may not be a difference between actions taking place under the influence of low and of high electromotive forces—whether water, *per se*, may not be an electrolyte towards high, although not towards low, forces, in the case of high temperature changes, or those brought about under the influence of the electric spark, for example. More attentive consideration of the subject has led me to think that this is not the case, and that we must treat high temperature changes such as occur and are involved in gaseous explosions in the same way as those occurring under ordinary conditions and at low temperatures. From this point of view, Mr. Baker's statement that ammonia and hydrogen chloride do not combine is of extreme importance; the formation of ammonium chloride from these two compounds apparently involves no interchange, but a mere combination of two substances each endowed with considerable "residual affinity," and there is no reason why a distinction should be drawn between such a case and that afforded by, say, *atoms of hydrogen and oxygen*, the difference being, it would seem, one of degree only; in fact, I am no longer inclined to believe that atoms are capable of directly uniting. In all cases at least one function of the (composite) electrolyte would appear to be that of providing the necessary "mechanism" whereby the degradation or discharge of the energy is effected. If this argument be sound, its logical extension involves the conclusion that *pure* gases should be dielectrics, *i.e.* that the passage of an electric discharge through a gas like that of an explosive wave through, say, a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen, can only take place if an electrolyte be present. Hitherto but little attention has been paid to the electric discharge in gases which have been highly purified. The peculiar behaviour of Tesla tubes referred to by Mr. Crookes in the discussion on Mr. Shenstone's paper on the formation of ozone is, perhaps, explicable from this point of view—it may be that the atmosphere within the tube does not become conducting until sufficient moisture and "impurity" have been projected from its sides. It is conceivable that a similar explanation may hold good in the case of Prof. Schuster's observation, that it is possible to urge a current of low electromotive force across a gas subjected to a high electromotive force in itself insufficient to cause a discharge in the gas; the atomic dissociation hypothesis put forward in explanation of the phenomenon does not appear to me to be sufficient.

Finally, the question arises, Can no line be drawn; are no two pure substances capable of combining or interacting:—For example, water and sulphuric anhydride? There is little to guide us here, but it seems not unlikely that water has special properties which enable it to act directly; moreover—perhaps because—in such cases composite electrolytes would result. Ammonium chloride, so long as it remains solid, is clearly a compound of a different order, and it may well be that compounds of this type are in no case directly obtainable from their constituents, because, under the conditions under which they are formed, they cannot behave as electrolytes.

Apparently, in all cases in which molecular aggregates are formed—as in the case of solutions—we are dealing with dissociable and dissociating systems, and it is not improbable that we may ultimately find an explanation of the mechanism of such changes in this fact.

At present there is no information forthcoming whether simple electrolytes, such as fused silver chloride, for example, will condition chemical change in the way that water does—whether, for instance, silver chloride will condition the formation of hydrogen chloride from chlorine and hydrogen, so that a gas battery might be constructed of these three substances.

HENRY E. ARMSTRONG.

THE SUCCESSION OF TEETH IN MAMMALS.

PROF. H. F. OSBORN, in the *American Naturalist* for June, gives an account of recent researches upon the succession of the teeth in mammals. He says:—

"The recent studies of Kükenthal, Röse, and Taeker in the discovery of the complete double or milk dentition in the Marsupials, and in the discussion of its relation to that of the reptiles, also in the ontogenesis of the crowns of the teeth among the Cetaceans, Edentates, Primates, and Ungulates are of the greatest interest and importance. They involve a complete revolution in our ideas as to the interpretation of the dentition in the three orders first mentioned above."

After giving an account of the work done by the European observers, Prof. Osborn shows, by means of a table, the phylogenetic order as observed by Cope and Osborn, and the ontogenetic order as observed by Röse and Taeker. His researches indicate that the earliest forms of mammals were homodont, and had two or more series of successional teeth. Then within the mammalian stem the teeth were differentiated, and there arose a great heterodont group with teeth at least of three kinds—incisors, premolars, and molars, all successional. From the most anterior premolar arose the canine. Then came the division between the Marsupials and the Placentals, the former tending to suppress the development of the second series of teeth, the latter retaining the second series as far back as the first molar. There is an obvious advantage in the line of succession being drawn at the first molar,[1] for upon the molars rested the necessity of complex development, and such development was best effected in permanent crowns.

1. All the so-called "milk molars" plus the so-called "true molars" constitute the *first series*. Beneath one or more of the "true molars" in lower mammals are rudiments of a second series. The *second series* consists therefore of these submolar rudiments plus the successional or permanent premolars, incisors and canines.

2. In the stem Marsupials the entire first series persisted and became mainly permanent (non-deciduous); the second series became rudimentary and non-successional with the exception of the fourth upper and lower premolars, and possibly one or two other teeth which either replaced or were intercalated between members of the first series. One or more premolars were suppressed, and one more molar retained than typical in the Placentals. Thus is explained the apparently atypical dental formula of Marsupials.

3. In the stem heterodont Placentals (excepting the Cetacea and Edentata) the entire first series persisted, and all the incisors, canines, and premolars remained deciduous. The successional second series persisted as far back as the first molar.

4. In the stem Cetacea the entire first series persisted, and the second series became rudimentary and non-successional. The tooth form changed from a heterodont to a homodont type.

5. In the stem Edentates, which also transformed from the heterodont to the homodont type, the first series became rudimentary, and the second series persisted in the succession even behind the region of the first molar.

Finally, there is evidence that a primitive succession in the region of the molar teeth, lost in the Marsupials and in the Placentals, was more or less fully retained in the Cetacea and Edentates.

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE Governors of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College have appointed Mr. W. H. Watkinson, lecturerer on engineering, Central Higher Grade School, Sheffield, to the Chair of steam, steam engines, and other prime movers, recently instituted in the college. By several important changes, the engineering department has been recently reorganised, Prof. Jamieson devoting his attention entirely to electrical engineering, Prof. Rowden to mechanics (theoretical and applied), Prof. MacSay to machine drawing, and Prof. Watkinson to the subjects stated above. With this addition and rearrangement the college now possesses an engineering staff worthy of one of the greatest engineering centres in the kingdom. Many additions are wanted, however, to bring the laboratories and general equipment to a position of equality with those even in many provincial towns.

[1] The law of molar evolution is that complication is most rapid in teeth which are longest in use. Thus the first molar is the most progressive tooth of the true molar series, and the last premolar is the most progressive of the premolar series. The apparent exception that the third milk premolar is always an advance type of the third permanent premolar is explained by the fact that the milk premolars are formed to assume the molar function

© 1893 Nature Publishing Group