

I cannot help thinking, that before publishing such an article, it would have been but in accordance with common accuracy and equity if you had verified the list of subjects taught in this medical school, by reference either to the prospectus or to one of the officials, who would have been pleased to give you all necessary information. The list relating to St. Mary's Medical School, in the number of the *Lancet* from which you prepare your table, teems with inaccuracies and omissions. It is not a list issued with any authority from this school, nor is it submitted for revision or correction to any official of the school. The statement in your article, that "the table does not pretend to be complete," is one that I cordially endorse; but the subsequent statement, that "it will serve to show the kind of science subjects on which lectures are given to medical students," is one that, as regards the teaching at St. Mary's Medical School, is both misleading and untrue.

My colleagues concerned in the management of this school feel with me that such a reference to our science teaching in a paper of such wide circulation as that of *NATURE*, is calculated to be most damaging to the interests of our medical school, which we have used every endeavour, and spared no expense, to render efficient from the educational point of view. We therefore trust that you will publish this letter in full, and that you will take the earliest opportunity of correcting the erroneous statement in connection with the science teaching here that appears in your issue of September 20 last.

ARTHUR P. LUFF.

[The students' number of the *Lancet* contains lists of the "classes, lecturers, and fees" at the medical schools of Great Britain, for the session 1894-95. We assumed that these lists were fairly complete, and the table referred to by Dr. Luff was prepared from them. It occurred to us that our contemporary may have omitted some courses inadvertently, and this led us to state distinctly that "the table does not pretend to be complete," and, later on, "courses of lectures on bacteriology are advertised to take place at nine medical schools, but it must not be supposed that they are the only schools having facilities for carrying on this work." The table served its purpose of showing the kind of sciences taught in medical schools in addition to the usual professional subjects. It was not intended to be used as a criterion of the efficiency of the schools individually.—ED. *NATURE*.]

#### Gohna Lake.

THE notices in *NATURE* (August 30, p. 428, and September 20, p. 501), on the overflow of the lake dammed up by a landslide at Gohna, in the Kumaun Himalayas, leave the impression that the dam burst and the lake was completely drained. This is incorrect. The accompanying extract shows that Mr. Holland's forecast, an abstract of which, with illustrations, appeared in *NATURE*, July 5, was singularly accurate. The whole occurrence is of remarkable geological interest, and it is important the correct facts should be known.

W. T. BLANFORD.

Weyburn, near Godalming, October 9.

Mr. Michie Smith, the Madras Astronomer, referring to the Gohna Lake, writes to the *Madras Mail*:—"My excuse for writing to you again on this subject is that I have now received trustworthy information regarding the present state of the lake, which makes it possible to compare Mr. Holland's forecast with what has actually taken place. In Mr. Holland's official report, he laid stress on three main points. (1) That the dam would not yield until the water overflowed it. This, as is admitted, was correct. (2) That the water would overflow the barrier about the middle of August. This was the result of a very intricate calculation, the data for which were obtained with great difficulty; yet, as we now know, this estimate was within ten days of the actual time, and on the safe side. Both these points were of much practical importance for the purpose of making arrangements in the valley below, and Government accepting the conclusions allowed traffic to continue in the valley for 160 miles till August 15. (3) Mr. Holland held that it was probable that 'there will be preserved above a lake 3½ miles long and 1¼ miles wide, whose destruction by gradual erosion of the dam and silting up of the basin, though a matter of time geologically considered short, will be sufficiently slow for what historically may be called a permanent lake.' Now, what are the facts of the case? According to the latest trust-

worthy report from Gohna, a lake has been left which is over 3 miles long and 400 feet deep, and so far as it is possible to judge it will have the permanence predicted for it. I hold no brief for Mr. Holland, but it seems to me that his predictions, founded on careful research and accurate reasoning, have been fulfilled to a most remarkable degree, and that he has fully justified the confidence placed in him by the authorities."

#### Instinctive Attitudes.

DR. LIVINGSTONE makes this interesting observation: "Manyuema children do not creep, as European children do, on their knees, but begin by putting forward one foot and using one knee. Generally a Manyuema child uses both feet and both hands, but never both knees. One Arab child did the same; he never crept, but got up on both feet, holding on till he could walk." ("Last Journals," p. 381.) The last instance suggests arboreal survival, the Manyuema style being pure plantigrade, but rarely seen in civilised life. Creeping of infants as instinctive activity certainly throws light on human evolution, and it may be that racial differences will be revealed by investigation. It would also be interesting to inquire how far idiosyncrasy in walking is connected with peculiarity in creeping. Swinging the arms seems quadrupedal survival. Looking down from a high building on people walking below, their movements thus projected on a plane are strikingly suggestive of a quadruped, and the professional pedestrian who makes the utmost use of arm-swinging to accelerate gait suggests the rapid shuffle of a bear.

Again, the various attitudes instinctively assumed by persons for sleep are significant for the evolutionist. I know those who naturally dispose themselves flat on the stomach, with the limbs placed much like a dog asleep.

So far as habits of creeping, walking, and sleeping have not been taught, but are purely instinctive, they throw light on the history of man. It is very desirable that travellers and residents in all countries secure photographs of these attitudes, and deposit them with anthropological societies, where they would be of great use to the investigator. HIRAM M. STANLEY.

Lake Forest University, October 3.

#### The Tetrahedral Carbon Atom.

IN the letter which he has addressed to you on this subject, it seems to me that Dr. Turpin has not succeeded in justifying his position. Whether your reviewer is or is not acquainted with all that has been written on the subject, is not a matter of great importance, though reference to the *Proceedings* of the Birmingham Philosophical Society (vii. part ii. p. 264) will be sufficient to show that the views of Wislicenus and Wunderlich have not been overlooked. The question is whether the writer of a text-book bearing on its title-page the word "Elementary," is justified in presenting without preface, and almost without explanation, a bald statement such as that complained of, which represents not the deliberate conclusions of the majority, or even of a considerable body of chemists, but speculations still in the earliest stage of evolution. (Wislicenus himself says, in reference to his own views, "Ich lege ihnen keineswegs den Werth einer wissenschaftlichen Ueberzeugung bei und möchte nicht auf ihnen 'festgenagelt' werden." *Ber.* xxi. 584.) I hope and believe that this sort of thing is not commonly taught to beginners in organic chemistry, and it may be as well for Dr. Turpin and his pupils to note that tetrahedral carbon is not referred to in any way in the syllabus of the first stage of organic chemistry in the Directory of the Science and Art Department. W. A. T.

#### "Abstract Geometry."

I SEE your reviewer of Prof. Veronese's book on "Abstract Geometry" says: "Apparently this method" (that of pure geometry, free from axes, algebraic processes, &c.) "has not previously been applied to the discussion of space of more than three dimensions." Will you allow me to point out to him that this is a mistake? The case of four dimensions is discussed, and a general method indicated, in my "Foundations of Geometry," which was reviewed in your issue of April 6, 1891 (vol. xliii. p. 554). I have not yet read Prof. Veronese's book, but from your review I gather he treats the subject rather differently. EDWARD T. DIXON.

Cambridge, September 28.