Here, in tropical Queensland, I was much troubled by various borers, and "silver-fish"; but for the latter, which apparently only devour the glaze on paper, and paste, I found a new remedy in adding alum to paste, and keeping glazed writing paper in tin boxes.

For the former a solution of *corrosive sublimate and thymol in alcohol*, appears to be an effectual remedy, though probably it would require to be re-applied from time to time; but certainly all books dressed by me with this solution inside and outside the covers, have never been touched since.

The newspaper extract (paper and date unknown), from which I obtained the information, read as follows:—"Surgeon-General Bidie, in the *Fishing Gazette*, recommends a solution of corrosive sublimate and thymol as a perfect protection for books from the ravages of bookworms and other insect pests, having tested it in tropical countries where the termite and the larvae of innumerable creatures batten upon everything eatable, from door-posts to bottle corks."

I have certainly found this remedy thoroughly efficacious, and think it deserves to be more widely known.

J. EWEN DAVIDSON.

Branscombe, Mackay, Queensland, October 20.

The Properties of Liquid Mixtures.

IN the abstract of my communication to the Physical Society in connection with Mr. R. A. Lehfeldt's paper on the above subject (*NATURE*, December 1, p. 116), the most probable explanation of the fact that, when American petroleum is distilled, the benzene comes over at about 65° instead of 80°, is stated to be that "benzene and hexane behave, as regards distillation, like miscible liquids." This should read "*like partially miscible liquids*."

The two liquids are, in fact, miscible in all proportions, and the point is that, in certain respects, they behave as though they were only partially miscible.

SYDNEY YOUNG.

December 6.

The Mildness of the Season.

As an instance of the mildness of the season, I may state that on Sunday, November 27, I gathered five ripe strawberries out of my kitchen garden; and that a considerable number of strawberry plants still show signs of flower. Moreover, the leaves of several deciduous trees, such as peaches, lilacs, &c., which are planted in sheltered situations, are still perfectly green; whilst many others are only just beginning to assume their autumn tints. I have also gathered several rosebuds this morning.

In this part of England all the leaves have usually fallen by the end of November. In fact, in ordinary seasons, the elms (which shed their leaves late) are quite leafless by the middle of the month.

A. B. BASSET.

Fledborough Hall, Holypot, Berks, November 29.

Iridescent Clouds.

THERE was a fine example of clouds showing iridescence on December 4, from 8.50 to 9.5 a.m., in the south-eastern sky. It occurred on a large white cumulo-maculo cloud, the iridescence being confined to the upper and lower margins, which were much striated.

This was at first the same period *after sunrise* as I have commonly observed the phenomenon to occur *before sunset*, i.e. at about an hour's distance from each event (*vide* my letter on the subject, *NATURE*, vol. lviii., p. 390). I have not seen it before in the morning.

E. ARMITAGE.

Dadnor, Herefordshire, December 5.

The Origin of the Aurora Spectrum.

WITH reference to the question as to whether there is any auroral line in the position of the krypton line about 587, the nearest lines to this that have been observed in the aurora appear to be 5765 and 595 observed by Gyllenskiöld. His observations were only rough, but the question is whether they are near enough to the krypton line for either of them to be the same as it. If there is any auroral line about 556, it is likely that the great brilliancy of that at 557 would account for its not having been seen.

T. W. BACKHOUSE.

West Hendon House, Sunderland, November 30.

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SVEN HEDIN'S "THROUGH ASIA."¹

CAPTAIN FRANK YOUNGHUSBAND prefaced his charming work on Central Asia "In the Heart of a Continent," by a lament that his early education had been wasted on dead languages, so that he started on his travels ignorant of scientific methods of thought or observation (see *NATURE*, June 11, 1896). Dr. Sven Hedin has no such fault to find with his upbringing. Trained in physical geography in the University of Berlin under the great Asiatic traveller Baron von Richthofen, he chose the least-known parts of Asia as a field for exploration, and fitted himself as an explorer by years of preliminary study and Eastern travel. Few men, especially in this country, attracted instinctively to the studies which can make them geographers, have had the opportunity of becoming travellers, although many travellers have been stimulated by their experiences to take up the study of geography. Dr. Hedin writes, as he travelled, like an accomplished geographer. He was no sportsman; and, although a sedulous collector, he was neither botanist, zoologist nor geologist, possessing only that sympathetic general knowledge of natural science which is essential to a geographer, and invaluable to a traveller as a guide to observation. He not only qualified himself in practical astronomy and surveying, so as to collect trustworthy material for maps, but took special pains to master all necessary languages. Besides his native Swedish he was proficient in German, French, Russian and English, and could thus converse easily with every European traveller and official he met; he had already learned Turki, so that in western Central Asia he could question the natives directly, and in the course of the journey he acquired sufficient facility in the use of Mongol and Chinese to enable him to dispense with interpreters.

Being a translation, though a good one, "Through Asia" cannot be compared in style with the best English books of travel; but in substance it is so full, solid and interesting that this is soon forgotten. An awkward phrase, indeed, puzzles one occasionally, such as "diopters" (which may mean the sights for a plane-table); "temporal observations," instead of "observations for time"; and a few others. The word "glen" is very frequently used in a sense which appears to be the same as valley, but may contain some undesigned shade of difference.

King Oscar, whose interest in travel and in all matters Oriental is well known, interested himself in the proposed journey, and assisted in supplying the very modest funds (1900*l.*) required for what has turned out to be one of the cheapest, as well as one of the best, of the great journeys of the century.

Dr. Hedin travelled altogether 14,600 miles, of which 2020 had never before been traversed by a European. He made a continuous map of his route for 6520 miles, which is now being worked up in the great cartographical establishment of Perthes in Gotha, and innumerable observations on the volume of rivers, the depths of lakes and the temperature of air, water and soil, which will all be discussed and published separately. His collections of natural history specimens and archaeological remains will also be made the subject of monographs. Thus although the mass of the scientific data obtained is large, but little of it is considered in this book, which is a compressed narrative of the whole three years' journey, containing, indeed, a fair amount of adventure quietly told, and just enough of the more technical aspect of geography to enable the general reader to understand the explorer's motives and appreciate his results. Enough is stated, however, to show that it is the record of one of the finest scientific journeys ever carried out in trackless Asia.

¹ "Through Asia," by Sven Hedin. With nearly three hundred illustrations from sketches and photographs by the author. Two vols. Pp. xx + 1278. (London: Methuen and Co., 1898.)