

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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## The Forest-pig of Central Africa.

It may interest many of your readers to know that the "forest-pig" heard of, at the same time as the okapi, by Sir Henry Stanley, and later on by Sir Harry Johnston, has at last been obtained and presented to the National Museum by Mr. R. Meinertzhagen.

This gentleman first had news of it from the natives of Mount Kenya, and took great pains to secure a specimen, but only succeeded in obtaining pieces of skin, from which no idea of its affinities could be gathered. At last, however, in the Nandi Forest, near the Victoria Nyanza, at an altitude of 7000 feet, he received two skulls, one quite perfect, and some further portions of skin.

These trophies show that the animal represents a most interesting new genus connecting the aberrant wart-hog (*Phacochoerus*) with the more ordinary *Suidæ*, such as *Sus* and *Potamochoerus*. It agrees with the first named in the number of its incisors, and shows a tendency towards it in the development of the canines and the structure of the molars. On the other hand, in the general proportions of the skull it is more like *Sus*.

Altogether, if it cannot be called absolutely ancestral to *Phacochoerus*, it must at least be looked upon as representing an early stage in the specialisation of that most remarkable type.

The animal itself is about as large as a wart-hog, and is well covered with long coarse black hair.

It is proposed to be called *Hylchoerus meinertzhageni*, and I hope to give a full description of it at an early meeting of the Zoological Society.

OLDFIELD THOMAS.

British Museum (Natural History), October 7.

## Appeal for Cooperation in Magnetic and Allied Observations during the Total Solar Eclipse of August 29-30, 1905.

THOSE who are in a position to take part in the above cooperative work are earnestly requested to make the necessary preparations and to put themselves in communication with the undersigned.

As this will be the best opportunity for some time to come to test and observe further the magnetic and electric phenomena which have been found to occur in connection with total solar eclipses, and as these phenomena are destined to play an important rôle in the theory of those variations of the earth's magnetism and electricity ascribed to outside forces, it is very much hoped that all countries through which or near which the belt of totality passes will organise and send in the field observing parties.

Owing to the minuteness of the expected magnetic effect, the burden of proof as to its association with the eclipse will largely consist, as in the two previous eclipses, in the connection of the times of the magnetic effects with the times of passage of the shadow cone at the various stations. The observing parties, therefore, should be distributed at intervals along as much of the entire belt as possible.

The above is merely a preliminary notification of the work proposed. Fuller details and suggested directions to be followed will be given later.

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## Instinct and Reason in Dogs.

THE following statements may be of interest to those of your readers who have at times discussed the question of instinct and reason in dogs.

A friend of mine was in a strange town, having with him an Irish terrier. Finding it necessary to fasten the dog up outside a house, he did so by tying it with a piece of cord. On coming out of the house he was just in time to see his

own dog being led away by a strange dog holding the cord in his mouth, having bitten it through. My friend often takes this same terrier, together with a fox terrier, out with him when calling. He ties the fox terrier by a cord to the scraper; as often as not the Irish terrier bites through the cord and frees his friend.

My own fox terrier seldom if ever goes to the stables, and whilst I am absent from home for a few days remains in his usual place; but almost invariably on the day when I am expected back he pays frequent visits to the stable, and is anxious to go with the carriage if he sees it being got ready; at all other times he is not willing to go with the carriage unless I am in it. On the two last occasions when I was expected home the dog acted as previously, but, in addition, jumped into the carriage as soon as it was brought out of the coach-house, a thing which he has never done before.

E. W. P.

October 8.

## Misuse of Words and Phrases.

As a constant reader of NATURE and of papers read before scientific societies, I have been struck by what seems to me an inaccurate use of language by English men of science which is rarely chargeable upon Americans—which is, at any rate, at variance with American usage. I will illustrate with the following examples:—

One star is five light-years distant; another is twenty-five light-years distant. The English astronomer will say that the second is *five times farther away* than the first.

A mass of aluminium weighs one pound; a mass of lead of equal size weighs something more than four pounds. The English physicist will say that aluminium is *more than four times lighter* than lead.

Both expressions seem to me incorrect and unworthy of a man of science who endeavours to express himself accurately. In the one case he should say that one star is five times *as far away* as the other. In the other case the whole expression is vicious. Weight, heaviness, is an attribute of matter; lightness is absence, or deficiency, of weight. To say that one article is a certain number of times *lighter than* another is like saying of two vessels unequally exhausted of air that one is four times emptier than another.

It is good English—is it not?—to say that one article is twice as heavy as another. If it is twice heavier, it is three times as heavy.

I submit this criticism of an Anglicism as an offset to some one of many criticisms of Americanisms.

Boston, U.S.A.

E. S.

NATURAL HISTORY ESSAYS.<sup>1</sup>

ON the whole, Mr. Renshaw appears to have been well advised in re-issuing in book form the sixteen articles and lectures which constitute the volume before us, since several of them contain much important information with regard to species now verging on extinction, or which have been already exterminated, while all are eminently readable and full of interest. Whether the author has quite done himself justice in the title he has chosen for his work may be open to question, seeing that all the articles relate to a single subject, namely, the mammals of Africa. Undoubtedly the most generally interesting and important articles of the series are the two dealing with the quagga and the blaauwbok, next to which may perhaps be ranked those on the white rhinoceros, the pigmy hippopotamus, and the giraffe. The book is abundantly illustrated with reproductions from photographs, many of which, like the one here shown, are excellent examples of animal photography.

While there is much to commend in the work before us, there are also matters with which to find fault. In the first place, the author has not revised his articles

<sup>1</sup> "Natural History Essays." By G. Renshaw. Pp. xiv+218; illustrated. (London and Manchester: Sherratt and Hughes, 1904.) Price 6s. net.