

The Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg has recently adopted a system from the transcription of proper names into Russian. The symbols adopted by the Imperial Academy of Sciences are as follows:—

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|---|-----------------|-----------------|---|---|-----------------|-----------------|---|---|-----------------|---|---|---|-------|-----------------|-----------------|
| а | б | в | г | д | е ⁵⁾ | ё ⁵⁾ | ж | з | и ³⁾ | і | й | к | л | м | н |
| а | б | в | г | д | е, je | ё | ж | з | и, ji | і | й | к | л | м | н |
| о | п | р | с | т | у | ф | х | ц | ч | ш | щ | ъ | ы | ы ⁴⁾ | ѣ ²⁾ |
| о | р | г | с | т | у | ф | ч | с | щ | — | у | й | ѣ, jě | | |
| э | ю ¹⁾ | я ¹⁾ | ѐ | ѡ | ѣ | | | | | | | | | | |
| е | ju, iu, | ja, ia | f | i | | | | | | | | | | | |

The table of Russian and Latin characters is accompanied by the following notes:—

(1) The liquid vowels и and ю beginning a syllable or preceded by ъ or ь (which, in the last case, are omitted from the transcription) are transcribed by "ja" and "ju"; if preceded by a consonant these vowels are transcribed by "ia" and "iu," if they form a syllable with the preceding consonant.

(2) The liquid vowel "e" and the vowel ѣ preceded by ъ or ь (which in this case are omitted in the transcription) are transcribed by "je" and "jě"; if preceded by a consonant these vowels are transcribed by "e" and "ě." But the liquid vowel "e" beginning a proper name is transcribed by a simple "e." Thus Egorov (pronounced Yegorov) begins with the liquid "e."

(3) The letter и preceded by ъ is transcribed by "ji" (the liquid "j").

(4) The letter ѣ at the end of a word or before a consonant is transcribed by "i."

(5) The letter "e," when it is pronounced "jo," is represented, as in Russian, by "ё," but only when the author writes his name in that way.

(6) The names of foreign authors who have written in Russian are re-transcribed according to this system when the original orthography of these names is unknown; when it is known, the transcription of the Russian form of the name can be given in a note.

The British system also proposed to use the original form of any Russianised proper name in preference to re-transliterating them.

The Russian Academy's system does not attempt to secure the precision in re-transliteration which was the main object of the British system; for the letter "f" stands for either ф or ф; "u" stands for "y" or occurs in combination with "j" (which is itself the transliteration of й) for ю; "i" may be the transliteration of any one of four letters, и, і, ѣ, or ѡ, as well as in combination with "u" and "a" from ю or я. The English "e" is the equivalent of either "e," ѣ, or а. Five Russian letters have alternative transliterations. Phonetically, the Russian system has some advantage over the British, although in this respect it is in some ways less satisfactory. The Russian system, however, is proposed only for proper names, for which a less rigid system is perhaps necessary than for general scientific and bibliographic work.

J. W. GREGORY.

DYEING QUALITIES OF NATURAL AND SYNTHETIC INDIGO.

THE annual report, written by Mr. Cyril Bergtheil, of the Indigo Research Station of the Bihar Planters' Association for the year 1907-8 has just been issued; it contains an interesting statement with regard to the value of "synthetic" indigo as a dye-stuff compared with natural indigo. From last year's experiments (see NATURE, vol. lxxv., p. 614) it was concluded that "synthetic" indigo gives poorer results under practical conditions than those obtained with the natural dye, the latter imparting a richness of shade or "bloom" which was unobtainable with the synthetic material. It has since been ascertained that the synthetic indigo supplied for the tests was "brand E" of the Badische Anilin- und Soda-Fabrik, which contains some 25 per cent. of lime; the presence of this high proportion of alkali would of itself

account for the bad results obtained in the hydrosulphite vat. Experiments will now be made using the material which the Badische company itself recommends for the hydrosulphite vat.

The rest of the report deals with the results obtained in experiments made to ascertain the best conditions to be observed during the growth of the indigo plant, and in the extraction of the dye subsequently. Good results have been obtained by the use of sulphuric acid as a means of facilitating the germination of the seed of the Java plant, as recommended in a previous report (NATURE, vol. lxxv., p. 497), but care must be observed in ensuring that the acid used is of correct strength. A number of interesting experiments made to ascertain the effect of manuring on the production of indican in the plant are also reported. It would appear that the proportion of indican in the plant is independent of, or is actually decreased by, manurial treatment; in fact, the production of indican appears to be a starvation phenomenon, the proportion of the dye being increased by the absence of moisture and by adverse climatic conditions. On the other hand, the fertility of the land must not be allowed to drop too much, otherwise the growth of the plant as a whole is interfered with, and the return of the dye per acre is affected. New fungoid diseases, and an insect pest producing ravages on indigo plants, are also dealt with in the report.

MAY METEORS.

MAY, like June, cannot be said to be prolific of meteoric showers or to offer special inducements to observers. There are, of course, the May Aquarids, due during the first week of the month in the morning hours. There is also a pretty rich shower of Coronids between about May 11 and 18, but they are not often seen in marked prominence; and I believe there is a special shower at the close of May from the N.W. region of Pegasus; at about 334°+28°, which deserves more attention. I found the position of this radiant on reducing a number of meteors recorded by the Italian Meteoric Association in 1870, and very satisfactorily confirmed the showers in 1886 May 29 to June 4, the exact positions being 330°+28° and 333°+27° respectively.

There is a well-marked radiant of slow meteors from this point in July and August, but it has been seldom noticed at the close of May and early days of June. This year moonlight will not interfere with observation, and it would be interesting to watch the eastern sky in the mornings of May 29 to June 4 for the purpose of further investigating these η Pegasids. They are of the Perseid type, being swift and streaking meteors, and I think the stream may prove of some importance among the spring showers, though very little is known of it.

Any observations conducted for the purpose of re-detecting the system may also be found useful in giving us a fuller insight into the other meteoric displays of the same period.

W. F. DENNING.

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

CAMBRIDGE.—Twenty students matriculated this term, bringing the total number for the year up to 1162. This is an advance of seventy-nine on the numbers for last year, and of ninety-seven on the numbers for 1906 to the present date. The increase in the number of advanced students over that of last year is ten.

It is proposed to confer the degree of Master of Arts, *honoris causa*, upon Mr. A. Henry, reader in forestry.

Mr. F. Darwin, F.R.S., has been nominated the representative of the University at a meeting convened by the Linnean Society of London to be held in July in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the reading of the joint essay by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace "On the Tendency of Species to form Varieties; and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection."

The general board has reported on the proposed readership in metallurgy which the University will be enabled to establish by the munificence of the Goldsmiths' Com-