

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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August Meteor-showers.

THE following meteor-showers become due during the month of August:—

Epoch August 12, 4h. 30m., approximately fifteenth order of magnitude. Principal maxima, August 9, 22h. 55m., and August 11, 19h. 15m.; secondary maxima, August 10, 12h. 45m., and August 11, 11h. 25m.

Epoch August 13, 2h. 30m., approximately seventeenth order of magnitude. Principal maxima, August 13, 7h. 50m., and August 15, 4h.; secondary maxima, August 14, 1h. 20m. and 13h. 15m.

Epoch August 15, 8h., seventeenth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, August 16, 20h. 15m.; secondary maxima, August 15, 11h. 50m., 21h. 40m., and August 16, 10h. 25m.

Epoch August 20, 16h., seventeenth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, August 18, 16h. 30m.; secondary maxima, August 17, 8h. 5m., and August 18, 6h. 40m.

Epoch August 17, 9h. 30m., third order of magnitude. Principal maximum, August 18, 20h. 30m.; secondary maxima, August 19, 14h. 10m., August 20, 12h. 45m., and August 21, 10h. 25m.

Epoch August 23, 16h., fifth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, August 22, 9h.; secondary maxima, August 21, 23h. 10m., and August 22, 12h. 55m.

Epoch August 23, 20h. 30m., twenty-fourth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, August 22, 20h. 50m.; secondary maxima, August 20, 0h. 35m., and August 23, 6h. 40m.

Epoch August 25, 21h. 30m., approximately first order of magnitude. Principal maximum, August 25, 8h.; secondary maxima, August 24, 5h. 10m., and August 25, 2h. 55m.

Epoch August 29, 21h. 30m., fourteenth order of magnitude. Principal maximum, August 30, 5h. 30m.; secondary maxima, August 31, 3h. 55m. and 13h. 45m.

Though the meteor-showers of August are somewhat numerous, yet, taken in general, they do not indicate great meteoric intensity, and this remark is true as regards the middle portion of the month, when the Perseid radiant is usually expected to be most active. The most noteworthy maximum in the early part of the month occurs on August 4, 2h. 5m., and other maxima of less intensity belonging to this period that may be particularised are those of August 4, 9h. 55m. and 23h. 45m., August 8, 2h. 40m., and August 9, 22h. 55m. During the middle period, August 10-20, maxima of note occur on August 13, 7h. 50m., August 16, 20h. 15m., and August 18, 20h. 30m. There is considerable meteoric activity also on August 22 and 25.

Early Perseids should be in evidence on the nights of August 2-6, and there are rather weak maxima of these meteors on the nights of August 10-11. The conditions as regards intensity improve on August 14-16, and the Perseid radiant may be found to be considerably, if not most, active on the night of August 16.

JOHN R. HENRY.

July 29.

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A Flower Sanctuary.

THE ravages of plant-raiders, about which Mr. Perrycoste so justly complains in your number for July 25, are a serious and growing evil, and the deplorable effects are felt and seen in almost every accessible part of the realm. I am encouraged to hope that the case of the Cheddar pink is not so crying as that of some other plants, especially orchids and ferns. It is far easier to grow the Cheddar pink from the seed which it produces so freely than to extract the roots thereof from its native limestone chinks. Let us hope that the plants Mr. Perrycoste saw offered for sale were grown for that purpose, just as white heather, once esteemed and hunted up as a rare emblem of good luck, is now grown in thousands by nurserymen, and hawked through the streets of northern towns at a penny a bunch. I do not know to which *Thalictrum* Mr. Perrycoste refers as suffering from plant-stealers; fortunately the Welsh poppy (*Meconopsis cambrica*) has spread to many districts of the country, and is naturalised far and wide.

In this matter, unluckily, botanists are among the worst offenders, for they reckon a herbarium specimen incomplete unless the root is taken away as well as the inflorescence and seed.

HERBERT MAXWELL.

Monreith, July 27.

Contrast Colours in the Use of Zone-plates.

THESE effects would never escape the notice of those who experiment with zone-plates, but perhaps they have not been previously recorded.

A zone-plate is placed at 14 ft. from an electric glow-lamp; 6 ft. further on a red image of the filament is formed, which is conveniently observed with a microscope eyepiece. As this is moved away from the plate there follows in view a continuous succession of images in all the colours of the rainbow. The chromatic dispersion extends along the general axial line through more than 6 ft. Whatever may be the colour of the filament, the groundwork of the circle of illumination assumes the complementary colour. It is surprising to observe how strong is the yellow field impressed upon the eye, while the violet image is growing imperceptible.

W. B. CROFT.

Winchester College, July 24.

LORD MERSEY'S REPORT ON THE LOSS OF THE "TITANIC."

THE proceedings of the Court, over which Lord Mersey presided as Wreck Commissioner, extended over thirty-seven days of public sittings, at which ninety-seven witnesses were examined, a large number of documents, charts, and plans were produced, and a great mass of facts and evidence was accumulated in connection with this "formal investigation" of the circumstances attending the loss of the *Titanic*. On the basis of these materials Lord Mersey, with the aid of five assessors, has produced a report in which twenty-six questions formulated by the Board of Trade are specifically answered. These questions "deal with the history of the ship, her design, construction, size, speed, general equipment, life-saving apparatus, wireless installation, her orders and course, her passengers, her crew, their training, organisation, and discipline; they request an account of the casualty, its cause and effect, and of the means taken for saving those on board the ship; they call for a report upon the efficiency of