

stations in France at which the observations cover a period of fifty years, from 1851-1900, but fairly long periods are given for fifty-eight stations which constitute the principal values dealt with. Mean temperature charts are given for each month, and there are also seasonal charts for winter, summer, and for the year. Diurnal range of temperature is also dealt with. Barometric pressure is treated in a very similar manner to the temperature, and mean pressure charts are given for all months and for the year. A chapter is devoted to the disturbances of the atmosphere, and a detailed description is given of the general movement of cyclonic and anticyclonic systems. Maps are given showing the prevailing winds and the resultants for the four seasons of the year. M. Bigourdan provides a good *résumé* of the climate of France in about 130 pages, and the information is expressed in a popular manner, although its scientific accuracy is all that could be wished. The numerous charts enable the reader to obtain the several meteorological factors for any part of France.

The Psychology of Relaxation. By Prof. G. T. Patrick. Pp. viii+280. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1916.) Price 5s. net.

On the further side of the Atlantic one of the world's great peoples has been swept away by a passion for wild and crazy amusement; on this side the others are locked in the bloodiest war the world has seen: these are the phenomena, at first sight antithetically diverse, which Prof. Patrick brings together in his study of "relaxation." With them he sets the craving for alcohol, constantly rising in spite of prohibitive legislation, and—*longo intervallo*—the habits, widespread if not omnipresent, of laughter and profane language. In the author's view all these forms of human behaviour are, at bottom, illustrative of a single principle. The activities and relations of civilised life imply the upbuilding and functioning of extremely complex mental mechanisms, full of tensions, restraints, and inhibitions. To maintain these always in operation is an impossible task. From time to time, therefore, the complexes break up, and man falls back with relief into conduct expressive of simpler mental structures organised and consolidated in the far distant days of the race's childhood: he plays, he laughs, he swears, he fights. Alternatively, he seeks the same end—the temporary dissociation of his too complex mental mechanisms—by means of the narcotic power of alcohol.

Prof. Patrick finds much to say in defence of his thesis—even for his rather startling view of war as a gigantic "rest-cure"—and says it very well. The cautious reader will, however, feel that he has pressed a sound principle of interpretation much too far—that he has brought into clear relief one factor in the phenomena he analyses, but at the expense of neglecting others of equal significance. Still, *his* factor is undoubtedly one of great importance, and his exposition of its rôle is both informative and pleasant to read.

T. P. N.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

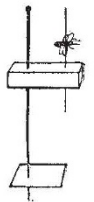
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Elasticity and Entomology.

IN NATURE for June 22 (vol. xcvi., p. 340) there appeared an interesting letter under the above heading from the pen of Prof. Bryan. Perhaps I may be permitted to contribute some further remarks on the same subject, although my distance from the centre of Empire must necessarily entail a long delay before publication.

Unfortunately, the method of setting insects upon "Continental" pins does not appear to be "old-fashioned," for a large number of specimens received by me from all countries (excluding England, where, on the other hand, the insects are often set too low) are set in this obnoxious manner. In dealing with the same I always handle them by placing the forceps upon them under the insect, at a point only slightly above the level to which they are to be driven into the cork. Even so, the danger of vibrations, causing loss of antennæ, etc., cannot wholly be obviated. After many years' experience I have come to the conclusion that the shorter pins of English make, be they "silvered," "gold," or black, are in every way preferable to the long German pins. The insect should, however, be set at least half-way up the pin, and not so low down as is necessitated by the construction of many of the peculiar "curved" setting-boards still in use in England.

Using the numbers of the well-known "Kirby and Beard" make of pins, out of the following numbers which I have in use every day, viz. 1, 3, 5, 8, 15, 17, and 19, Nos. 1, 3, 5, and 8 may be classed as *stout*, and can be relied upon never to bend when inserted into cork or "lino," unless handled extremely roughly. Nor, so far as I can see, is there any deterioration in the elastic quality of such pins over a period of at least twenty years. On the other hand, Nos. 15, 17, and 19 must be classed as *slender* pins, and can never be relied upon, for certain, not to buckle under the pressure necessary to place the insect firmly in the cabinet. As all the smaller kinds of insects must be set upon one or other of these pins, or upon the even smaller silver-wire pins known as "caps," I have come to the conclusion that the only safe plan in all these cases is to use the Polyporus strips first suggested by Lord Walsingham—who, I believe, found this fungus growing in Merton Park, and ingeniously turned it to entomological use. As these strips are now sold by at least one firm in Australia, no doubt they are easily obtainable in England. A short piece of the strip is cut off and placed on a No. 8 pin, as shown in the illustration; the finer pin carrying the insect is gently inserted into the other end of the strip. The label may then be placed on the larger pin, below the strip, *facing upwards*, so that it can be read without moving the insect. I have a series of a new species of Coniopterygid, expanse only 3 mm., and the smallest Neuropterous insect known to me, set in this manner upon "caps," and they look extremely neat in the cabinet.



Returning to the subject of vibrations, might I suggest the use of a very simple expedient to obviate the constant breaking-up of the abdomen in those insects with long or fragile bodies, such as dragonflies? This is the process of bristling, which I have used with success for years, but which I have never