

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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The Concilium Bibliographicum of Zürich.

THERE appears to be in England some misapprehension in regard to the Concilium Bibliographicum of Zürich. All zoologists are probably aware that the international agency founded by the International Congresses of Zoology and Physiology has for twenty-one years been concerned in editing the "Bibliographia Zoologica"; but many seem to believe that the ownership has remained vested in the hands of Wilhelm Engelmann, of Leipzig, and that the undertaking has consequently fallen a victim to the war. To give the proper historical perspective to the work, its genealogy may be tabulated as follows:—

Series	Titles
I. ("Bibliotheca historica naturalis," I.) 1700-1846	13,560
II. ("Bibliotheca Zoologica") ... .. 1846-1861	40,750
III. ("Bibliotheca Zoologica," II.) ... .. 1861-1880	125,000
IV. ( <i>Zoologischer Anzeiger</i> ) ... .. 1861-1895	115,000
Prior to Concilium ... .. 294,310	
V. ("Bibliographia Zoologica") ... .. 1896-	202,500
Total... ..	496,810

On the death of Prof. J. Victor Carus, in 1903, the Concilium Bibliographicum became sole editor of the "Bibliographia Zoologica"; but the work remained a part of the *Zoologischer Anzeiger*, and was printed and distributed in Leipzig. In 1909 arrangements were made for printing in Zürich. Three years later the Concilium Bibliographicum acquired all rights over the "Bibliographia," and the relationship with the *Zoologischer Anzeiger* was severed. Vols. xxiii.-xxv. (1912-13), however, were still distributed to the book trade through the intermediary of Wilhelm Engelmann, the last part being ready in March, 1914. Vol. xxvi. went to press in April, 1914, and a circular announcing the fact that all services had been brought together in Zürich and that the new volume would be sent only to such as filed a new order was issued in June and July. The vacations and the outbreak of the war have caused this circular to be entirely overlooked, so that many zoologists have fancied that the great historic work had been suspended. This is far from being the case. Despite formidable difficulties, vols. xxvi.-xxix. have appeared, and vol. xxx. is in the press.

There has doubtless been a great falling off in the scientific output of all European countries, and the postal service is to blame for many gaps, but, in general, the experience of the past two years has shown the wisdom of the choice of a small neutral State as the centre for international co-operation. It is also worthy of being pointed out to the world of science that Switzerland, in spite of financial difficulties, which made it necessary for the Government to suspend almost all its support of Swiss science, made an exception for this international agency. The President of the Confederation proclaimed allegiance to the "Red Cross" of science, and our international institute continued to receive State subsidies. At the same time a public subscription brought together the necessary funds for covering the war-time deficit.

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Director of the Concilium Bibliographicum.  
Sunnyside, Mayow Road, Forest Hill, S.E.,

October 31.

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Scarcity of Wasps.

JUDGING from the correspondence which has recently appeared in NATURE, the dearth of wasps this autumn in many parts of England has been most pronounced, but I have not noticed any reference to the county of Somerset.

From August 26 to September 12 I was staying, with my wife and son, in a cottage on Christon Hill, on the Mendip Hills, situated between Loxton and Banwell, and although sunshine was only occasional, and rain somewhat frequent and often very heavy, we were simply besieged by wasps, which were particularly tiresome at the breakfast-table. They were so numerous at times, coming in from the open windows, that we frequently had to abandon our meals temporarily to punish the offenders, my son continuing his captures often for half an hour at a time. They were killed by the score daily, but still they seemed to infest everything, not only preserves and other food, but one's clothing also. In neighbouring houses we heard of the abundance of wasps. About 150 yards from our cottage we found a large nest of wasps in a bank by the roadside.

I cannot recollect ever having seen so many wasps in a house, unless it was during the hottest part of 1911 (August 31 to September 9), when I was conducting archaeological excavations on Exmoor. At the hotel we were greatly pestered by the quantities of wasps which attacked the food.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

Taunton Castle, November 4.

A Peculiar Thunderclap.

REFERRING to Mr. Don's letter (NATURE, August 17), it may be of interest to note that for many years I have been observing thunderstorms, often from high places on Etna, and from a distance, and I have never seen a lightning flash which was a single one. Lightning flashes from the clouds to the earth are always two, three, or more, either very rapidly repeated on the spot and along the same track, or in different places, sometimes very far apart, and simultaneously.

In connection with the remarks by "H. O. F." (NATURE, August 24), it may be worth mentioning that, as is well known, a lightning stroke induces in volcanic rocks a permanent magnetisation, often strong enough to make the needle of a pocket compass turn through an angle of 180°. From a large number of observations on Etna and Stromboli, my brother, Prof. Gaetano, and I have noted that, when lightning strikes a wall, or a large lava block, or the earth-wire of a lightning rod near a wall, south polarity is found in the lava, or in the bricks of the wall, to the right of the observer, and north polarity to the left. Such a disposition shows that the discharge was from +electricity of the ground to -electricity of the clouds.

Other observations on similar autoregistrations of lightning strokes and of their direction have shown that the discharge from the clouds to the earth is much less frequent than that from the earth to the clouds.

My brother and I will be glad to send our published notes to anyone who cares to have further details on the subject.

GIOVANNI PLATANIA.

University of Catania, October 6.

The Pollination of Toadflax.

CAN any reader kindly state—from observation—which insect pollinates the round-leaved toadflax—*Linaria spuria*?

S. P.

*Linaria spuria*, Miller, is a not uncommon weed of cornfields on calcareous soils in the Midlands and south of England, in western, central, and southern