

history; I trust that the pleasure of your pursuits affords you some reward for your exertions. Some time since you were so kind as to send me through Mr. E. Lumb some *most curious*, and to me *most valuable*, information regarding the Niata oxen. I should be deeply obliged by any further facts about any of the *domestic* animals of La Plata; on the origin of any "breed" of poultry, pigs, dogs, cattle, etc. I should be much interested by a brief description of the habits and appearance of the pigs, dogs, etc., which have *run wild*, and especially on the habits of these wild breeds, when their young are caught and reared. Will a puppy of one of the run-wild dogs, if brought up carefully, be as tame as a common dog? Any information on *all* such points would be of *real service* to me; and my address, should you find time to write to me, will always be that at the head of this letter. I most sincerely wish you all success in your admirable labours, and if at any time I can be of any service, I shall be happy to be so; but I am sorry to say I am not connected with any mercantile establishment and cannot recommend agents, etc., etc.

With much respect, I beg to remain, Sir,

Your obliged and obedient servant,

CHARLES DARWIN.

P.S.—I omitted to state that Prof. Owen has heard that a collection of bones from Buenos Aires some time since arrived at Paris.

Plated Teeth of Sheep.

PLATING of the teeth of sheep with "gold" can scarcely have been a common phenomenon, in Scotland at any rate, for in the few cases mentioned by the older writers it is recorded as something of a marvel.

In 1536 Hector Boece, Bishop of Aberdeen, thus described the sheep of Doundore (Bellenden's translation):—"In Gareoth [Garioch, a district of central Aberdeenshire] is ane hill namit Doundore, that is to say, the Goldin Montane. The scheip that gangis on this montane ar yallo; thair teeth are hewit like gold; thair flesche reid, as it wer littit with safron; thair woll is on the same maner." This locality remained for a couple of hundred years the typical Scottish locality, if one may so call it, for golden-toothed sheep, for it is mentioned by many writers, whose accounts vary mainly in the spelling of the hill-name—Dundore, Dunedere, Dinnedure, etc. It is the prominent conical, ruin-capped hill, still known as Dunnideer, near the railway station of Insch, in central Aberdeenshire.

Martin, in his "Description of the Western Islands of Scotland" (1703), almost suggests that the colouring of the teeth in the Outer Hebrides is due to native gold in the soil:—"The Natives affirm that Gold Dust has been found at *Griminis* on the Western Coast of the Isle of *North Uist*, and at *Copveaul* in *Harries*; in which, as in other parts of the Isles, the teeth of the Sheep which feed there are died yellow."

In these cases it is likely that iron in fair quantity was present in solution in the bogs and streams, for Dunnideer is formed of a cap of coarsely grained syenite lying upon the basic intrusive mass of the district, which possesses a moderate ferro-magnesian content, while the peat-bogs characteristic of the Outer Hebrides rest upon Lewesian gneiss, the ferruginous tendency of which in the area is indicated by the presence of patches of hornblende and garnet. In the Aberdeenshire area, iron pyrites, also, is disseminated throughout the intrusive mass in microscopic crystals.

JAMES RITCHIE.

Edinburgh, June 7.

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The Organisation of Scientific Literature.

IN the current number (June, 1917) of *Scientia* (pp. 530-32) there is a somewhat full account of discussions that took place at the meeting of the Italian Society for the Advancement of Sciences at Milan in April last, which are of great interest to us, particularly at the present time. Prof. Gino Loria spoke about national and international collaboration in publications on science and culture, and Prof. Eugenio Rignano spoke on projected scientific periodicals of the Entente. The praiseworthy scheme of Prof. Rignano was fully described by him in a letter printed in *NATURE* of January 25 of this year, and I may also refer here to an article by myself on the organisation of scientific literature in *Science Progress* for last April. It is necessary that the nations of the Entente should take immediate steps to make themselves less dependent on Germany for the results of organisation of scientific and philosophical literature, if for no other reason than that Germany's powers of production are very much lessened at present, and probably will be even more so in future. Science is, of course, not an affair merely of particular nations or groups of nations; all nations should combine to make the work of advance in science rather easier by organising its literary aids. It seems that we, in particular of all nations, ought not to remain content with the position into which we have fallen in this possibly humble organising duty of science. I may remark that I have been in correspondence with the Government with respect to plans for Government action in this direction, and that, though some outcome of the correspondence does not seem impossible, it is to be feared that the curse of delay will act as a clog on the wheels of progress. One would have thought that by now the evils of inefficiency, slackness, and neglect of science had been sufficiently forced upon us. In France, Italy, and America there have been public expressions of a wish to help in this need for the organisation of the literature of scientific research.

PHILIP E. B. JOURDAIN.

The Bourne, Basingbourne Road,
Fleet, Hants, June 2.

The Origin of Flint.

SIR E. RAY LANKESTER (*NATURE*, June 7, p. 283) attributes the black colour of flint to carbon, but has he considered whether ferrosferric oxide may be the cause of the colour?

I have recently observed a similar, almost black colour in specimens of hydrated, colloidal sodium silicate, which contained small quantities of oxide of iron, originally in the ferrous state, but partly oxidised.

It has been pointed out by Hofmann and Resenschek (*Annalen*, 1905, vol. cccxlii., p. 364) that depth of colour in various chemical compounds is connected with the presence within the same molecule of atoms of an element exercising two different valencies. The deep colours of sulphur sesquioxide and uranouranic oxide are examples of this phenomenon, and especially the deep blue colour of ferric ferrocyanide. The dark colour of hydrated, ferrosferric oxide is well seen when white, ferrous hydroxide, precipitated by alkali from ferrous sulphate solution, undergoes atmospheric oxidation, or when a mixed solution of ferrous and ferric salts is similarly precipitated. The greenish-black colour, which cannot possibly be due to a mixture of white, ferrous hydroxide and reddish-brown, ferric hydroxide, is to be attributed to a compound of the two hydrated oxides.

R. M. CAVEN.

University College, Nottingham, June 11.