thus to spread the pear-tree beyond its present limits and to obtain from a more robust stock an increased thickness of edible flesh, and perhaps improvement in flavour; and parcels of *P. indica* seed were sent to the southern United States to test this means of fruit development. But the wild Persea is fast disappearing from our forests through sheer improvidence, and its priceless pink-tinted mahogany will soon be extinct.

The alligator pear—the "midshipman's butter" of other days—is mainly eaten in Madeira as a breakfast-table fruit, generally with pepper and salt, and is especially to be commended as a sapid adjunct to a well-made salad, garnished with segments of the fruit as with hard-boiled egg, and sprinkled with the edible flowers of *Cercis siliquastrum* when available.

The Portuguese authorities will some day realise that the fertile valleys into which these mountain-slopes are cloven may be more profitably occupied than with sugar-cane by the custard apple, alligator pear, and other plants the perishable product of which Madeira only, from its situation, can supply in perfection to the European markets; and our perennial green peas, Cape gooseberries, February strawberries, hognuts, and broad beans will then be available in profusion while the Northern markets still wear their wintry aspect.

MICHAEL GRABHAM.

Madeira, June 7.

Eye-Colour in Bees.

EVERY biologist is now familiar with the colour-variation in the eyes of Drosophila, and the remarkable contributions to biological theory which this variation has made possible. It is not so well known that among the Anthophorid bees there are striking differences in eye-colour, which must have arisen in a manner analogous to those of Drosophila. These differences usually characterise species; thus in the genus Centris one form has the eyes crimson, another green, another grey. In Anthophora two closely related species from New Mexico differ, one having the eyes green, while in the other they are dark purplish. There are other differences, and the species are quite distinct. I have just obtained evidence of mutation in eye-colour within the species. *Anthophora porterae*, Ckll., is a large species with clear green (olive-green or pea-green) eyes. The varieties *Watsoni* and *semiflava* agree with the typical form of the species in this respect. However, on May 23 of this year, at White Rocks, near Boulder, Colorado, Miss Marie Chandler found a male with the eyes dark bluish-green (sea-green). This may be called mut. Thalassina. On drying, after death, the eyes became grey marbled with black.

T. D. A. COCKERELL.

University of Colorado, Boulder.

British and Foreign Scientific Apparatus.

IT may be said at once with emphasis that British scientific instruments cannot be made in factories at the present wage-rates and under prevailing labour conditions at twice the pre-war prices if identical in quality and construction. Mr. Ogilvy discloses the same fact with regard to German instruments when he states in NATURE of June 3 that the wages rates of Germany are 400 per cent. higher than in 1914, and that working conditions are difficult in every way.

The only reason that German firms can sell in English money at from 60 per cent. to 100 per cent. above pre-war rates is on account of the benefit they have under to-day's rate of exchange, which values the mark at 1½*d.* only. It is obvious that German firms are doing remarkably well for themselves by selling in England at about twice the pre-war price.

The question is not one of free trade, prohibition, or import under licence, but whether the scientific instrument manufacturing of this country is to continue or not. It is recognised that scientific apparatus is a necessity to the nation, and should properly be maintained as a "key industry." The manufacturers have the courage and the enterprise, and have been making preparations for production by new methods on a large scale for many months under exceedingly difficult conditions, but with the assurance that some degree of protection would be given to them.

I have before me as I write an offer of 11,935 prism binoculars lying in London by leading German makers, all at the same price and far below the cost at which similar binoculars can be made in this country at the present time. This, surely, is a case of "dumping."

It must never be forgotten that the scientific instrument makers in this country were among the foremost in the production of precise instruments for the war. Works were enlarged and plant increased to make instruments of which the Government had never encouraged the manufacture in this country, preferring to buy from Germany in times of peace; and the more effectually a comparatively small firm did its work in war-time, the more it is handicapped now. Several firms are laden with premises and plant, and have excess profits liabilities which are difficult to meet in cash, while capitalists will not put money into scientific instrument manufacturing businesses under present conditions.

Production would be hastened on a scale commensurate with the needs not only of this country, but also of the world, if these facts were faced and met; and it is the opinion of scientific instrument makers that some degree of protection should be afforded during the period that the mark and the franc have such a depreciated value.

There are no "trusts" in the British optical world, as a correspondent in NATURE suggests; there is severe competition between all manufacturers.

British manufacturers have never been slow in throwing open their works for the inspection of those who are interested, and if your correspondents and readers could be induced to pay a visit to some of the works in this country and see exactly what is going on and the possibilities that exist, they might be led to take a view of the subject which would offer encouragement to the hardly pressed, but still optimistic, British scientific instrument maker.

If any readers of NATURE should wish to visit optical works, and would send a note to the secretary of the British Optical Instrument Manufacturers' Association, Ltd., 2–3 Duke Street, St. James's, arrangements would quickly be made.

F. W. WATSON BAKER.
(W. Watson and Sons, Ltd.)

313 High Holborn, London, W.C.

Applied Science and Industrial Research.

PROF. SODDY and Major A. G. Church both say in NATURE of June 3 that my letter published on May 27 confuses the issue. It may be so; I have never known a controversy in which each side did not, sincerely, accuse the other of the sins of irrelevancy and confusion. I have no desire to enter on a detailed discussion of personal views. My sole aim was to raise certain principles that seemed to me in danger of being overlooked. I think Prof. Soddy's suggestion will meet the case: that readers of NATURE who are interested should obtain a copy of the full report of his address. They can then judge for themselves how much or how little occasion there was to justify my letter.

J. W. WILLIAMSON.

3 Canterbury Mansions, N.W.6, June 12.