Defoliation of Oaks.

A REFERENCE to the defoliation of oaks, particularly on the borders of Surrey and Hampshire, by the larvæ of *Tortrix viridana*, was made in NATURE on June 10. It concludes with the remark that the effect of the defoliation is to check "the growth of the trees to some extent for the time being, but is rarely more serious."

At Haslemere, in the south-west corner of Surrey, infestation by the Tortrix larvæ was sufficiently marked fifteen years ago to be the subject of comment, and it has continued ever since. In some years the attacks were very severe. For a long time infested trees did not appear to suffer any serious harm. In recent years, however, the American White Mildew, *Oidium alphitoides*—which in the early years of its appearance in this country infested the leaves of pollard and sapling oaks only—has invaded the new leaves which the trees put forth after defoliation by the caterpillars. The effect of the combined attack is already becoming very serious. In the tract of country lying between the towns of Haslemere, Petersfield, Midhurst, Petworth, Horsham, and Godalming, many oaks have been killed outright, and large numbers are slowly dying. It seems very desirable that these dead and dying trees be removed and destroyed, or they may become centres for the spread of beetles destructive to timber.

E. W. SWANTON.

Educational Museum, Haslemere,
August 1.

Scorpions and their Venom.

PHYSALIA in "Animaux Venimeux," p. 252, says that in all venomous animals their immunity to their own venom is limited, and announces that in an experiment a scorpion, *Bulteus australis*, was killed by an injection of the same venom as its own. I should like to add further observations from personal experience, bearing on this very interesting subject.

Until very recently, by many, and even now by some, the accepted opinion of men of science was that each venomous animal carried its own antidote, *i.e.* was immune to the effects of its own venom.

So long ago as 1900, when for some weeks during the Boer War I was stationed with my company in the Blue River mountains opposite the Metrosberg Peak in Cape Colony, I witnessed numerous fights between the different species of scorpions. In more than a hundred fights between two scorpions, each of the same species, whether black, red or yellow, the result was always the same, the one that was stung by its opponent dying almost immediately, 10 seconds being the longest interval between receiving the sting and death.

The result when *different* species were pitted against each other was the same, but that was to be expected.

C. E. F. MOUAT-BIGGS.

Hampden Club, Hampden Street, N.W.1,
July 7, 1922.

Bloomsbury.

IT is to be regretted that in his interesting article on Bloomsbury and the University of London, Mr. Humberstone repeats the erroneous statement that Bloomsbury was originally Lomesbury. That statement was made by John Stow, London's first historian, but one can only suppose that he was misled by the mistake of some early copyist. The earliest form of the name known to me is Blemidesberie. I am writing away from references, but that form is at least as old as the fourteenth century. Like other place-names ending in *-sbury* it must be derived from the personal name of its owner, possibly Blemund.

The further statement that the Royal Mews, at Bloomsbury, were burnt down in 1537, is also not quite accurate. The royal stables were burnt then, but the Mews (*i.e.* falconry) were situate at Charing Cross, on the site of the present Trafalgar Square, at least as early as 1443 (the earliest reference verifiable at the moment). It was the transference of the royal stables to Charing Cross that led to the change in the meaning of the word "mews" to that which it still bears.

A. MORLEY DAVIES.

Amersham, July 29.

I REGRET that my article should have contained the errors to which Dr. Morley Davies draws attention. Stow wrote: "But in the yeare of Christ 1534. the 26. of H. the 8. the king hauing faire stabling at Lomsbery (a Manor in the farthest west part of Oldborne) the same was fiered and burnt, with many great horses, and great store of Hay. After which time, the forenamed house called the Mewse by Charing Cross was new builded, and prepared for the stabling of the kings horses. . . ." H. B. Wheatley in "London Past and Present" states that Bloomsbury is a corruption of Blemundsbury, the manor of the De Blemontes, Blemunds, or Blemmots. Blemund's Dyche, which was afterwards Bloomsbury Great Ditch, and Southampton Sewer divided the two manors of St. Giles and Bloomsbury. He adds: "There is an absurd statement, taken from Stow's Survey, that the name of Bloomsbury was originally Lomsbery. This could only have occurred by a misprint, in which the B was inadvertently dropped."

T. LL. HUMBERSTONE.

Absorption of Potassium Vapour in the Associated Series.

IN our investigations on the optical properties of potassium vapour we found that there were some traces of absorption in the above series at about 1100° C., the results of which were embodied in a note to appear shortly in the *Phil. Mag.* As a result of further experiments conducted in the Physical Laboratory of this college, we now feel fairly sure that we have detected distinct traces of absorption in the diffuse series; the bands 5780, 5340, 5300, and 5100 surely correspond to 5782, 5340, 5323, and 5100 of $(2p\text{–}m.d)$.

The well-defined dark line 4640 previously observed by us at about 900° C. is confirmed to be the combination line $(1s\text{–}2d)$ recently observed by Datta in the vacuum arc spectrum of potassium (Proc. Roy. Soc., 99, April 1921) and by J. K. Robertson on "Electrodeless Discharge in certain Vapours" (*Physical Review*, May 1922).

At these high temperatures the chemical difficulties are so great, and the conditions in the experimental tube so unstable, that, in spite of many attempts, we found it difficult to obtain a good negative, on account of the tube giving way owing to the chemical action of potassium vapour on its walls. Further experiments are in progress, and we hope to confirm these observations by photography, as these experiments lend weight to Saha's theory of temperature radiation.

A. L. NARAYANA.
D. GUNNAIYA.

Maharajah's College, Vizianagram, July 10.