

an entirely new field for research by botanists, and it is probable that it may have an important bearing on the problem of fruit and vegetable transport and storage.

An account of the experiments undertaken to illustrate the above will be published in due course.

I. B. POLE EVANS.

MARY POLE EVANS.

Office of the High Commissioner for the
Union of South Africa,
Trafalgar Square, London, September 22.

Coral in Medicine.

IN the serious contributions published in recent issues of NATURE on the subject of black coral, no one seems to have remembered that in the "Médicin malgré lui" Molière makes Sganarelle offer a medicinal cheese to Perrin for his mother, thus :

P. Du fromage, monsieur ?

S. Oui ; c'est un fromage préparé, où il entre de l'or, du corail et des perles, et quantité d'autres choses précieuses.

And Sganarelle's last words are, " Si elle meurt, ne manquez pas de la faire enterrer du mieux que vous pourrez."

F. JEFFREY BELL.

September 20.

Biography of Sir Norman Lockyer.

MISS LOCKYER and I are preparing a biography of my husband, Sir Norman Lockyer, in a form which I hope will make it not only of interest to his many friends and admirers, but also a contribution to the scientific literature of the present day. If any readers of NATURE happen to possess letters from my husband, I should be greatly obliged if they would give me the opportunity of seeing them. My object in making this request is that any matters of general interest which thereby come to light might be incorporated in the work.

The letters would not be quoted, except with the permission of their owners, and would be returned as soon as their contents had been noted.

T. MARY LOCKYER.

Salcombe Regis, Sidmouth,
September 22.

Harpoons under Peat at Holderness, Yorks.

AT the recent meeting of the British Association at Hull there was a very lively discussion at Section H about some harpoons said to have been found under peat in Holderness. May I ask you to be so good as to spare a little space, in order that I may say more fully what time prevented me from saying then ?

There is a doubt about the authenticity of those harpoons. Mr. T. Sheppard believes them to have been *made* by the supposed finder ; Mr. A. L. Armstrong, who introduced them to the meeting, believes them to be genuine. I also believe one of them to be genuine, the smaller of the two ; about the other I am not so sure. But I expressed no opinion as to whether, if genuine, they were found locally or not, since I have no means of forming an opinion. It is possible that they—or the smaller of the two—were found in archæological excavations abroad ; and a fictitious site in Yorkshire given to them later to enhance their interest.

Mr. Sheppard quite rightly says that the discovery

of a flint axe of a certain type " in the neighbourhood " proves nothing. But I understood that it was found under a depth of peat. In type it is Campignian, exactly what one would expect to find associated with harpoons of early neolithic type.

There can be little doubt that in Holderness exist remains of the early neolithic age, remains which are older than the Long Barrows. Apart from surface-finds, the pile-dwellings or platforms at Ulrome are evidence of the existence of habitations there which seem to be neolithic ; they contained stag's-horn axes of a well-known early neolithic type—though it is true that type survived right through the neolithic period on the continent. There is thus *no a priori* reason for rejecting the harpoons ; they are just what I have always expected would be found in Holderness.

However, we cannot use suspect material as evidence, and the best thing to do is to go into the field and test it. If Mr. Armstrong will find a site where flint flakes and implements are to be found under the peat in sufficient numbers to justify digging, I will come and bring a spade with me.

O. G. S. CRAWFORD.

Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton,
September 18.

A Curious Luminous Phenomenon.

I HESITATE to trespass on your space in describing an observation which may be more common than I suppose.

While standing about twenty yards from the sea-shore and looking due south out to sea, the horizon and a region slightly above it (elevation only about 1° or 2°) were lit up by a faint white light which extended laterally over a segment subtending an angle of about 30°.

The conditions under which this light was seen were as follows : Time, 7.15 p.m. ; wind strong from the west, bringing up a good deal of low cloud and very fine rain in the air causing bad visibility ; sea rather rough with four lines of breakers at the shore. The appearances of the light were not the same to my wife as to myself. Her impression of it was that it was a light which she saw only if her eyes followed it, yet it consisted of a long streak of light parallel to the horizon with a break in it and then another small streak. My impression was that of a light which appeared to flash up over the horizon, subtending the angles already noted, the flashes not succeeding each other regularly. I had the feeling that my eyes had to be just right for getting the impression at all.

As to the cause, I think we can eliminate that of distant lightning ; the weather had not been for many days of a thundery type, and it is unlikely that distant flashes would light up a streak of the distant sky embracing such a wide lateral angle and yet be restricted to an elevation of not more than 2°.

The sky above the horizon was darkly and uniformly clouded at the time, so that the horizon was barely visible, but white-capped waves could be seen far out at sea. The brightest objects in the field of view were the lines of breakers at the shore, and it may be that the retinal images of these being very near to that of the horizon were the cause of the phenomenon. Perhaps some readers of NATURE are familiar with this sort of observation and will point to the obvious cause.

S. R.

Aldwick, Sussex,
September 16.