

Transcription of Russian Names.

I DO not wish to prolong the correspondence upon this subject further than to say that in their letter appearing in NATURE, October 14, p. 512, Messrs. Druce and Glazunov meet (in my opinion) none of the objections to a Czech-script transliteration of Russian pointed out in my letter (NATURE, July 15, p. 78), but merely reiterate their views,—in which, by the way, I think I could pick a number of holes were space available.

But I should prefer not being misquoted.

I did not "ask how many English people can correctly pronounce Czech letters like *č*": (for, of course, any one can pronounce that letter, *i.e.* English *ch*). I said I wondered "how many Britons would pronounce this 'c' [that is, *ts*] correctly"—if they came across it suddenly in a Czech-script transliteration of Russian. The same criticism applies to the quoted Russian *ч* (=Czech *ch*), which would, therefore, be wrongly pronounced by the ordinary Briton as *ch* in church instead of as *ch* in loch.

As I previously pointed out, the very simple Royal Geographical Society II. system already exists in English; so why not use it? EDWARD GLEICHEN.

Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore,
London, S.W.7, October 20.

APART from the typographical objections to a Czech transcription of Russian, which have been pointed out by Lord Edward Gleichen, there are other difficulties in its use. From Prof. Brauner's examples his does not appear to be a uniform letter-for-letter system, at all events in the treatment of Russian "soft" vowels. For example, the letter *я*, when initial, would presumably be transcribed *ja*, as in *языкъ, jazyk*; but if it happens to follow *д*, *н* or *т*, the letter *j* is dropped in the transcription and the Czech letters *d*, *n*, *t* are employed, *vide* Prof. Brauner's examples *Tatana, Dada*. And how is Russian "soft" *р*, which is represented in the Czech language by *ř*, pronounced *vřh* (*r*+French *j*), to be transcribed? For example, is *ръдъ* to be rendered *řád*, which gives the wrong pronunciation, or *vjad*, which is not Czech?

Again, it is not clear how Russian *е* and *э* are to be treated. The natural Czech transcription would be *e* and *ě* respectively; but Prof. Brauner writes *Menděljěv*, in which there are three different ways of transcribing Russian *e*.

The semivowel *и* is apparently to be transcribed *j*; but *ij*, *yj*, are not the Czech equivalents of *и*, *ы*. Does Prof. Brauner write *Čajkovskij*? (Incidentally, the average Briton would pronounce *čaj* like *cadge*.)

Prof. Brauner would, I hope, go so far as to abandon Czech for the transcription of Russian *р*, and would let us write *Vinogradov*, though the true Czech would be *Vinohradov*.

Messrs. Druce and Glazunov maintain (NATURE, October 14, p. 512) that the system has the advantage of being complete; but what is the complete system? The foregoing points want clearing up.

JOHN H. REYNOLDS.

Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore,
London, S.W.7, October 21.

Volcanic Shower in the N. Atlantic.

THROUGH the courtesy of Dr. Russell (Director) and of Mr. J. W. Carruthers, of the Fisheries Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries at Lowestoft, I am enabled to record a shower of volcanic dust that occurred near the Faroes on Thursday, October 5, soon after 5 A.M.

The captain of the steam trawler *Prince Palatine* reports that his mate directed his attention to what

looked like a sudden appearance of land on the port quarter, when the vessel was about 62° 7' N. and 7° 43' W., Myggenæs (an islet west of Vagö) being on the starboard quarter. A heavy sandstorm soon enveloped the vessel, lasting for the extraordinary period of sixty-seven hours, during which the air resembled that of a London fog, while the vessel was covered with a deposit from stem to stern. Only a very small sample of the material is available; but Mr. Carruthers rightly concluded that it consisted of volcanic glass. With him, I note a few opaque particles; but these are in part white by reflected light, while others are merely fragments of deeply coloured glass. The material is a characteristic dust of volcanic glass, distinctly brown, and probably andesitic or basaltic. I can trace no crystals; some of the particles show twisted wisp-like forms, and the majority are comminuted pumice, resulting from attrition in the air of masses in which the volume of vesicles exceeded that of glass. Branching forms, like spicules of lithistid sponges, are thus common. Mr. Carruthers informs me that the Meteorological Office record shows that the position of the fall lay in a cyclonic depression, with a wind from somewhat east of south, blowing at 17 miles an hour.

The duration of the fall may possibly be due to a circling round of some of the material. Its occurrence seems worth recording, for comparison with dust that may have fallen on other ships at the same date. Some account may be forthcoming from the northern isles of the Faroe group. It is most probable that the source was an eruption in Iceland, the dust having in that case travelled about 500 miles. The fine glassy dust has no doubt become sifted out from coarser matter during transit.

GRENVILLE A. J. COLE.

Carrickmines, Co. Dublin, October 21.

Orientation of Molecules in a Magnetic Field.

ABOUT this time last year, at the suggestion of Prof. A. W. Stewart, I began some work to test whether or not the molecules of a substance (more particularly at first of a liquid) underwent an orientation when placed in a magnetic field. So far the results all seem to indicate that something of the kind does take place. The method first adopted was analogous to Laue's method of diffracting X-rays. A parallel pencil of X-rays was directed through a small cell containing barium iodide placed between the poles of a large electro-magnet, and was then received on a photographic plate. During the first complete exposure no current was run through, during the next current was run through, and the process was repeated with a second pair of plates. In the case of both pairs of plates it was found that the disc which came up dark on development was greater in diameter for the exposure during which the magnet had been excited than for that when it had not been excited. The increase was more than ten per cent. of the original diameter. This effect may be analogous to that observed when a pencil of X-rays is passed through a powdered crystal. So far this method has not been used in a very refined manner, but it is hoped to continue with it and to improve it. The results obtained by it, however, have been corroborated by entirely independent methods, in which the properties of X-rays were not made use of.

The question of the nature of the orientation, in addition to that of its occurrence, is still under investigation here, and I hope to be able shortly to make a further communication on this subject, giving more detail as to both the results obtained and the methods employed.

MARSHALL HOLMES.

The Sir Donald Currie Laboratories,
Queen's University, Belfast, October 10.