

found in their territory than that the Eskimo would domesticate the caribou. As Laufer has shown, the Chinese had the wild walnut and a wild vine, but it never occurred to them to cultivate either.

Though the botanical aspects of the question are beyond the sphere of my competence, I should like to refer the reader to E. Werth's paper on the banana ("Zur Natur- und Kulturgeschichte der Banana," in *Festschrift Eduard Hahn*, 1917, 22-50). The author shows—satisfactorily, so far as a layman can judge—that the African wild species, *Musa ensete*, could not by any possibility have given rise to the cultivated banana. So far as I remember the report of Dr. Berry's paper in *Science*, his Colombian banana is of the African type and must accordingly be ruled out as a possible ancestor of the cultivated forms.

ROBERT H. LOWIE.

University of California,
Berkeley, California.

Phyllody in the Primrose Flower.

THROUGH the medium of the columns of NATURE, may I record the occurrence in this neighbourhood of a pair of plants of *Primula Vulgaris* (Huds.), both of which illustrate the phenomenon of phyllody of the sepals.

The calyx is the whorl of floral leaves chiefly involved. The teeth of the calyx, normally narrow and sharply pointed, have become revolute, acuminate, miniature leaves above the tubular portion, while this latter part has—but for slight increase in size—retained the normal tubular form, the veins being rather more obvious. Tracing this increase in foliar characters in the sepals through several flowers, it was noticed that the increase is accompanied by a decrease in the size of the individuals of the corolla.

The stamens (the flowers in every case in both plants were 'thrum-eyed') and pistil were in all cases normal in appearance, but the more the reversion characters were developed in individual flowers the shorter was their duration. Normal flowers on normal plants are still flowering while the diminutive corollas and staminate parts of the retrogressive flowers withered within four days of opening.

The measurements of the foliar sepals are: 1.45 cm. from top of calyx tube to acuminate point; 1.20 cm. broad at the greatest breadth. These figures represent the average for the five sepals of the flower exhibiting the greatest reversion. The average diameter of the most abnormal flower is 3.2 cm., measuring across the sepal expansion.

The plants are being maintained in the laboratory here, and will be watched through subsequent seasons. The seeds of the abnormal flowers will be sown.

F. R. BROWNING.

Bedales School, Petersfield,
March 13.

The Crystalline Style and Anaerobic Respiration.

THE review of the *Journal of the Marine Biological Association* (vol. 13, No. 4) in NATURE of January 2, p. 31, has directed my attention to the very interesting paper by Dr. Yonge on the hydrogen ion concentration in the gut of certain lamellibranchs and gastropods. In the course of this paper Dr. Yonge criticises my suggestion (*J. of Exp. Zool.*, vol. 37, p. 477) that the disappearance of the crystalline style from certain marine molluscs when they are kept under anaerobic conditions may be, in part, a direct response to the lack of oxygen. Dr. Yonge holds that the disappearance of the style is "probably

due to a lowering of the vital activities" of the animals, amongst which the secretion of the style-forming material is one, and that in the case of an animal the vital activity of which is thus reduced, the secretion cannot keep pace with the consumption of the style substance for digestive purposes. The style consequently disappears.

The evidence which Dr. Yonge and others have brought forward seems to leave it beyond doubt that the crystalline style plays an important part in digestion, but this does not exclude the possibility that it may also be connected with, and affected by, anaerobic respiration. Dr. Yonge's experiments do not seem to have been designed to differentiate the two possible functions, since the only methods employed by him to lower the vital activity of the animals with which he worked involved keeping them under anaerobic conditions. May not the resulting dissolution of the style be an expression of an effort on the part of the animal to offset the strain on its vital activity induced by anaerobiosis as well as by the necessity to maintain the acid condition of the gut for the purpose of digestion? The facts that the style disappears under anaerobic conditions and is regenerated by aeration *in the total absence of food material to digest* seems rather to point in that direction.

It seems to me that the matter must be considered *sub judice* until a series of experiments can be designed to follow the possibly manifold functions of the style independently of one another. C. BERKELEY.

The Biological Station,
Nanaimo, B.C., Canada,
February 4.

Renewed Activity of Cameroon Mountain.

CAMEROON Mountain, which has been more or less dormant since the last eruption in 1922, has recently been showing signs of renewed activity. The following extract from a letter by Mr. E. J. Arnett, Senior Resident, Cameroons Province, dated November 30, 1925, may be of interest to readers of NATURE:

"You may be interested to know that the summit of the mountain is showing more signs of activity than for some time past. There is a large old crater on the west side of the summit about 400 yards in diameter and 150 feet deep. From its western and southern lip the ground falls rapidly away, and this face of it is visible from the 12,000-foot ridge as the mountain is ascended from Buea. This south-west face was seen to be white with fresh ash and steaming when I ascended the mountain on 29th instant accompanied by Mr. J. C. Drummond-Hay and Mr. C. W. Seed, Auditor.

"On reaching the top we found the whole circumference of this crater was white and steaming and the ground hot to the tread for some way back, with many small fissures giving out steam. The bottom of the crater was evidently cold, as the lichen-covered rocks which appeared to have fallen from the lip were fresh and green.

"Beyond the summit, *i.e.* north-west of it, between it and an almost equally high peak, there is a long valley or crater in which are a number of recently formed circular pits varying in diameter from 3 to 20 feet. These, it appears, have been formed during the past three months, but are now quite cold and black. There are about a dozen of these holes in a rough line running south-east and north-west."

J. D. FALCONER.

Geological Survey, Nigeria,
February 8.