

# 130th anniversary



Hildebrand in Germany, and Darwin in England, have investigated the very important part played by insects in the fertilisation of the pistil of one individual by the stamens of another individual of the same species. It is now generally admitted by botanists that cross-fertilisation is the rule rather than the exception. ... For this cross-fertilisation to take place, however, some



foreign agency like that of insects is evidently necessary ... How then is fertilisation accomplished in those plants which flower habitually in the winter, when the number of insects that can assist in it is at all events very small? ... During the winter of 1868-69, I had the opportunity of making some observations on this class of

plants; the result being that I found that, as a general rule, fertilisation, or at all events the discharge of pollen by the anthers, takes place in the bud before the flower is opened, thus ensuring *self-fertilisation* under the most favourable circumstances, with complete protection from the weather, assisted, no doubt, by that rise in temperature which is known to take place in certain plants at the time of flowering. The dissection of a flower of *Labium album* (Fig. A) gathered the last week in December, showed the stamens completely curved down and brought almost into contact with the bifid stigma, the pollen being at that time freely discharged from the anthers. A more complete contrivance for self-fertilisation than is here presented would be impossible.

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The "Female Physicians" question, thanks to Professor Masson, has made a great stride during the past week. Ladies are to be admitted to study Medicine at Edinburgh University. Imagine the feelings of the non-contents when Professor Masson, in a final outburst, described their argumentation as "rampageous mysticism, dashed with drivel from Anacreon!"

## A selection of words and images from the first issue of *Nature*, published on 4 November 1869.

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An eclipse of the sun, so beautiful and yet so terrible to the mass of mankind, is of especial value to the astronomer, because at such times the dark body of the moon, far outside our atmosphere, cuts off the sun's light from it, and round the place occupied by the moon and moon-eclipsed sun there is therefore none of the glare which we usually see — a glare caused by the reflection of the sun's light by our atmosphere. If, then, there were anything surrounding the sun ordinarily hidden from us by this glare, we ought to see it during eclipses. In point of fact, strange things are seen. There is a strange



halo of pearly light visible, called the corona ... What, then is the evidence furnished by the American observers on the nature of the corona? It is *bizarre* and puzzling to the last degree! The most definite statement on the subject is, that it is nothing more nor less than a *permanent solar aurora!* ... Formerly, a favourite argument has been that because the light of the corona is

polarised; therefore it is solar. The American observers state that the light is *not* polarised — a conclusion, as M. Faye has well put it, "very embarrassing for Science." Further, — stranger still, if possible, — it is stated that another line of inquiry goes to show that, after all, Halley may be right, and that the corona may really be due to a lunar atmosphere. ... Certainly, never before was an eclipsed sun so thoroughly tortured with all the instruments of Science. Several hundred photographs were taken, with a perfection of finish which may be gathered from the accompanying reproduction of one of them.

The public anxiety about the fate of our great explorer, Dr. Livingstone, has been anything but allayed by the recent telegrams from Bombay and Zanzibar, wanting, as they seem to do at present, the stamp of the approval of Sir R. Murchison. The Bombay mail is now hourly expected; and, by the opening meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, Sir Roderick will be in possession of all the data on which to form a complete estimate of the recent intelligence, and will communicate the results. In the meantime, we wait and hope; Livingstone is not the man to do his work hastily or incompletely, or to return leaving anything unexplored.

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