

met with a stranger so nearly like herself, and induced it to take her own nightly place in a strange house and with a strange hen.—Was it an act of charity towards a stranger wandering in search of a night's lodging? or was the duckling tired of the hen's company, and desirous of joining the birds of her own feather, and so cajoled the stranger so nearly resembling herself to take her place, believing the cheat would not be discovered?

I commend this fact, for which I can vouch, to Mr. Darwin.

A. W. BUCKLAND

Bath, March 31

Acquired Habits in Plants

ON Oct. 24 last, I found by the banks of the little river Aled, in North Wales, a dog-violet, which, in the first place, was in flower at that unusual season, and in the second place, growing in a hedge, had assumed the habit of a climbing plant. Its stem measured $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length; it bore sixteen alternate leaves, the flowers being axillary, or rather some axils had flowers in them, and others had branches of leaves with flowers axillary in these. One flower only was actually in bloom, but there were several (five or six) seed vessels. I gathered one plant and have it still.

St. Asaph, N. Wales

J. G.

SCIENCE AND THE PRESS IN AMERICA

(FROM A NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT)

THE visit of Prof. Tyndall has given an extraordinary impulse to scientific affairs in this country. It took place at a fortunate moment, just after the heat and turmoil of a presidential election had been transformed into the national sorrow over the death of the defeated candidate; just before the exposures of corruption, which have since disgraced eminent public men, had begun to absorb popular attention. It therefore happened not only that men's minds were not preoccupied, but that, in addition, newspaper columns were not specially crowded. Hence all the leading newspapers gave more space than would have otherwise been possible, to reports of Prof. Tyndall's lectures. In this particular, however, one paper surpassed the rest, giving the lectures verbatim and with illustrations, and afterwards reprinting them in a separate sheet, which, as you are probably already informed, attained a special circulation outside that of the newspaper, of more than 200,000 copies. It is not improbable that this enterprise on the part of the *New York Tribune* originated in a programme for the management of that paper laid down by the late Mr. Greeley. This was printed in its columns the second day after the election, when he resumed his position as editor of the paper. The card specified among other things, first, that thereafter the paper would be enabled to give "a wider and steadier regard to the progress of science, industry, and the useful arts." His successors in the management of the paper have been anxious, for obvious reasons, that it should tread the path he had marked out for it; Tyndall's coming furnished the first opportunity. Other papers have been stimulated by the popularity of scientific topics which the success of these lectures revealed, and there never was a time when such themes found such general acceptance with the newspaper press.

The first manifest benefit to science which has resulted, is an improvement in the treatment of scientific subjects, so far as they are editorially considered. It is not a year since one of the New York newspapers contained an article upon a proposition to light streets and houses by means of hydrogen and oxygen conveyed in separate systems of pipes. In that article there was displayed an ignorance of the commonest facts of chemistry that seemed almost incredible. It teemed with the most ludicrous absurdities. But even its rivals never perceived the blunders—they had a fair share of their own, for the most part, whenever they handled such topics. But of late the writers in the New York newspapers have exhibited some knowledge of such subjects; at all events, special articles in some of the papers betray the touches

of a professional hand, that come not with the surface knowledge of journalism.

The second evident benefit has to-day a signal illustration. The efforts of Prof. Tyndall were particularly directed toward impressing upon those of our citizens who have the means for such aid, the benefit that results to the community from the promotion of scientific inquiry. This has been also a favourite theme with Prof. Agassiz. A few days ago a Boston correspondent of the *New York Tribune* sent a description to that paper of the work that Prof. Agassiz had undertaken at the Museum of Comparative Zoology; his efforts to obtain State assistance from the Massachusetts legislature; his needs and difficulties, and unsparing, disinterested industry; his project for founding a school of natural history on the coast of Nantucket, where practical work with the dredge might enable the students to become acquainted with marine organisms in a condition of nature. The newspaper commented on the correspondence, pointing out the value of such services, of such researches. The letter and comment interested Mr. John Anderson of this city—a gentleman who has gained wealth as a tobacco manufacturer. Some years ago, finding his health suffering from too close application to business, he selected as a salubrious retreat an island on the New England coast. It is one of the Elizabeth Islands, between Vineyard Sound and Buzzard's Bay. You will best know just where this is, by the fact that New Bedford, the old whaling port of Massachusetts, is on Buzzard's Bay. He expended about 25,000 dols. in improving Penikese Island, and in its delicious climate he regained his health. He refused 75,000 dols. for the island, valuing it at 100,000 dols. Last week, after reading about the aims and efforts of Prof. Agassiz, Mr. Anderson wrote to him, offering him Penikese Island as a gift, and saying to him that he could there establish his Marine Naturalist's School.

To be a little more specific—as such a munificent gift deserves: Penikese is the most northerly of the three western islands of the Elizabeth group. It is of great fertility; it contains a good summer residence; looks out upon a beautiful bay, where there is good anchorage; has a stone dock, and springs of good water. Here is everything that Prof. Agassiz wanted for his semi-nautical enterprise.—Stay! not everything. When Prof. Agassiz first recovered from his surprise, and was thanking the donor, he mentioned a little embarrassment. He had made his arrangements for Nantucket, and there was a little money expenditure involved in the change. "Let not that trouble you" writes Mr. Anderson, and straightway proffers a money-gift in addition—50,000 dols. in cash, "as a nucleus for a permanent endowment fund." And Prof. Agassiz, his heart as well as his coffers running over, says that now his enterprise shall not be merely a summer school, but an institution for all seasons and all time.

The correspondence between Mr. Anderson and Prof. Agassiz will, I am told, be furnished to the press within a few days; but Mr. Anderson is modest; and does not want much fuss about it. It is his first approach toward the hill of science, and he had no personal acquaintance with Agassiz whatever. The scientific sensation of to-day's newspapers is a story that the Natural Bridge of Virginia is burning up. It is told with great detail by eye-witnesses who testify to volcanic burnings and a sulphurous smell, to falling rocks and general danger. Prof. Campbell, of the geological department of the Washington and Lee University, evidently credits the story, and attributes the phenomenon to chemical action, induced by high water acting upon sulphurous and bituminous deposits containing metallic oxides. A New York paper decries the whole story, asserting that the fire proceeds from tar-barrels, and that the whole display is in the interest of hotel-keepers anxious to excite curiosity and attract custom.