

	ft.	in.	ft.	in.
1. A thin layer of stalagmite.				
2. Black impure guano	0	3 to 1	0	
3. White clay with <i>Potamidés decollatus</i>	1	0	2	6
4. Guano				variable
5. Débris of clay and guano, with frag- ments of limestone and stalagmite in abundance... ..	?	0 to 3	0	
6. Pure yellow felspathic clay	4	0	5	0
7. Limestone floor.				

This particular cave could not be readily worked owing to the influx of water, but other caves exist at higher levels which would be more promising. The expense for six months' work, according to Mr. Everett's estimate, would not be more than the mere passage-money of anyone going out from England. I may add that Mr. Everett quite understands the proper mode of working, having had personal communication with Mr. Pengelly on the subject at Kent's Cavern. He is now thoroughly familiar with the country and the workmen to be employed, and it seems a great pity that advantage should not be taken of his residence in so interesting a locality, the proper exploration of which may throw light on a variety of biological problems.

ALFRED R. WALLACE

"You will recollect that some three years ago I came to Sarawak with the object of making general collections of natural history and, more particularly, of investigating the cave-deposits of Borneo.

"From time to time I made excavations in various caves situated in Upper Sarawak, being assisted pecuniarily by the Rajah to a certain extent. These excavations varied in depth from 4 ft. to 14 ft., and were made in different situations in the caves. No remains of interest, however, were discovered beyond some teeth of a *Hystrix*, and bones of man, bats, geckoes, &c., in the most superficial deposits, and the only result worth recording was the find of a stone axe-head in a bed of river-gravel. This celt was forwarded to Sir C. Lyell, and such remains as were obtained from the caves were sent to Messrs. Busk and Pengelly at intervals; but the latter, together with a recent tooth of *Rhinoceros* and two collections of miscellaneous specimens, appear to have been wrongly transhipped in Singapore, and I have never been able to trace their whereabouts.

"After considerable observation and experience I now wish to state with all frankness my belief that my work was not carried on as it should have been, and that the non-existence of ossiferous deposits in the Bornean caverns is very far from being a proven fact. The inquiry as conducted by myself was not thorough, and it was unsatisfactory partly because I was in serious pecuniary difficulties myself, and partly because what I saw of the poverty of the Government and the remarks I heard dropped about the folly of expending money on such objects made me very shy of taxing the Rajah's liberality. I was, and am still, persuaded that the expense of cave-working in a country like this would have proved very much heavier than the Rajah had any idea of, and hence I worked with inadequate support.

"In the event of those who are interested in the exploration being desirous of having it continued, I venture to suggest that the person chosen for the work must either possess considerable private means or he must be employed at a regular salary; and further, that the work should be carried on with sufficient funds to render it independent of any assistance the Government here might afford. Money is so scarce here, and public wants so many and pressing, that assistance for purely scientific objects is not to be expected. Coolies are not procurable now under a wage of 2*l.* a month, and, owing to the rivers being the only roads, travelling expenses are heavy. For tools, lights, gun-powder for blasting, and such preliminary expenses, a sum of 15*l.* would be sufficient; and the monthly working expenses would vary from 10*l.* to perhaps as much as 15*l.*, according to the accessibility of the cave to be explored; so that for working a cave for three months a sum of 65*l.* would probably be required.

"As I am now employed in the Government service, I do not think I could undertake the work unless a formal application was made to the Rajah for the necessary leave of absence. Even were leave obtained, I do not suppose that I should continue on Government pay, and I could not afford to undertake the work under a salary of 25*l.* per month. The cheapest way of conducting the exploration would be to send out a gentleman of independent means who would do the work for its own sake, and then only the actual working expenses need be subscribed for. Supposing

remains were ultimately found, the item of freight would have to be added to the working expenses.

"I am induced to write you this letter from reading a note in *NATURE* for June 13, 1872, with regard to the Victoria caves, in which two years of constant but seemingly fruitless work has in the end proved successful. Trusting that another exploration may be attempted in this far more important field, and with like success, I remain, &c.,

"To A. R. Wallace,
"Sarawak, February 1, 1873"

"A. EVERETT

A Fact for Mr. Darwin

THE interesting fact contained in the following passage appears to me to deserve disinterment from the pages of a very large book, a work too, which, so far as I know, has never been translated. It occurs in the "*Eptéologie Générale*" (Par Duménil et Bibron, tome vi. p. 467), and I met with it while employed in working out a collection of reptiles, which I was engaged in classifying. The passage is as follows:—"Dans les villes d'Égypte, on rencontre souvent des charlatans exposant à la curiosité publique des *Eryx javelots vivants* auxquels, afin de les faire passer pour des *Cerastes*, ils ont en le soin d'implanter, en manière de corne, audeessus de chaque œil, un ongle d'oiseau ou de petit mammifère, par le même procédé que celui qu'on emploie dans nos fermes pour fixer deux ergots sur la crête de certains coqs quand on les chaponne.

"C'est d'après des individus ayant la tête ainsi armée de deux fausses cornes, qu'Hasselquist a fait son *Anguis cerastes*. Nous avons dans les collections du muséum des individus dont la tête porte ainsi des ongles recourbés d'oiseau, avec leur cheville osseuse, dont l'adhérence à la peau est parfaite."

Here is a fact, not only well authenticated, but capable of verification, demonstrating such close affinity of intimate structure and function between animals of *different classes*, that the skin appendage of one has been actually engrafted upon the skin of the other; the claw of a bird has formed perfect union with the skin of a snake. A good illustration of the affinity between birds and reptiles pointed out by Prof. Huxley.

I do not notice that statement about the claw of a small mammal being used for this purpose, because specimens illustrating it are not referred to.

The snakes alluded to in the passage are the *Eryx jaculus* (one of the *Erycidae* or sand-snakes of Dr. Günther), which is perfectly harmless: and the *Cerastes Hasselquistii*, a small but fierce and venomous viper; both inhabiting Egypt, and the latter supposed to have been the "asp" of Cleopatra. The *Cerastes* obtains its name from the so-called "horns," peculiar to the males, which are developed from modified scales over the centre of each orbit, attaining the length of about half an inch. The *Eryx* is about the same size as the *Cerastes*, for which it is passed off by the Egyptian snake-charmers, when manufactured as above described.

H. D. MASSY

Grenada Villas, Netley, near Southampton

The Phœnician Vademeccum

It is gratifying to see (vol. vii. p. 351) that you express a doubt whether the Cowrie shells in the Pomeranian barrows must necessarily, as Wagner supposes, have been brought by the Phœnicians. Because the earliest Greek historians introduced the Phœnicians to us they have been employed as a universal machinery for carrying out all kinds of operations. This theory is in fact incompatible with our present knowledge of the duration of the human race, and, we may say, with the relative antiquity of the Phœnician epoch, which can date but little beyond the historic period. Thus we are led to neglect the evidences of skulls, weapons, tools, monuments, and languages, which show that there must have been communications between distant regions long before the rise of the Phœnicians. There are many prehistoric races which had a sufficiently wide distribution to provide for the dissemination of such a small object as the Cowrie. Among these may be named the dwarf or short races, of which the Mincopies of the Andamans are a type; the race now represented by the Agavs of the Nile, Avkhass of Caucasus (Achivi), and Omagua and Guarani of Brazil; and the Dravidian race. Populations which could distribute men over the continents and islands of Europe, Africa, Australia, and the Americas must have been capable of distributing cowries and beads without Phœnician intervention. At present the Phœ-