Meteor

As meteors are rarely seen by day, I write to inform you that I observed one this morning, at exactly 10.20 A.M., not only in broad daylight, but in bright sunshine. I only caught a hasty glance of it as it was disappearing. It was in the eastern side of the sky, descending towards a point in the horizon nearly due north from us, at an angle of about 40°. As we are quite in the country, it could not have been anything else than a meteor. I found that two of our servants had seen it also, and described it as having a tail, which I did not see. JAMES ELLIOT

Goldielands, near Hawick, March 25

The Bermuda Lizard

In his "Geographical Distribution of Animals" (Am. ed. ii. p. 135), Mr. Wallace states, speaking of the Bermudas, that "a common American lizard, *Plestiodon longirostris*, is the only land reptile found on the islands."

Plestiodon longirostris is not a common American species. It is peculiar to the larger islands of the Bermuda Archipelago. It was described by Prof. E. D. Cope (*Proceedings* of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, 1861, p. 313) from Bermuda specimens. It has never been found elsewhere. Its closest affinities are with a West African species.

G. BROWN GOODE

U.S. National Museum, Washington, January 21

Landslip near Cork

The village of Coachford, on the River Lee, sixteen miles from Cork, has been the scene of a curious landslip, or subsidence of soil.

On Wednesday, the 13th inst., a man on his way to work, at about eight o'clock A.M., on going along a path beside a dyke or bank which separates two fields close to the village, noticed a breach in the dyke which had not existed before; and on going to examine, found a deep hole in the earth about a yard in diameter, the depth of which appeared to him to be about a hundred feet, and at the bottom of which he heard the sound of running water. From that time till six o'clock P.M. the hole gradually increased in diameter by the falling in of the sides, until it appeared as I saw it on Sunday, the 17th inst., a conical cavity fifty to sixty feet in diameter and thirty to forty in depth.

The soil is composed of gravel and sand, with a substratum of limestone.

The same thing has evidently taken place several times before in the immediate vicinity of the above-mentioned cavity, as there are no less than seven other similar depressions of various sizes in the same piece of ground, but the formation of none of these is remembered by even the oldest inhabitants of the place.

I should mention that the fields between which the landslip has taken place lie pretty high, and that the River Lee is about half a mile distant. A belief has long existed in the village that a stream, which is supposed to flow into the Lee, runs beneath the place, at some depth underground.

Cork, March 20 C. J. COOKE

JOACHIM JOHN MONTEIRO

A FEW days ago (NATURE, vol. xvii. p. 391) we recorded the melancholy fact of the death of this enterprising African traveller. We have since been favoured with a few particulars of his life and labours, which appear to us to demand more than a passing word of recognition. His work on "Angola and the River Congo" (Macmillan, 1875) is still fresh in the mind of the public, and has been made doubly interesting through the recent travels of Mr. Stanley. Mr. Monteiro commenced his scientific education at the Royal School of Mines, under the late Sir H. De la Beche, and at the College of Chemistry under Dr. Hoffmann, at both of which places he obtained first-class honours. His first visit to Angola was in the year 1858, when he went to work the Malachite deposits at Bembe, in that province, and also the blue carbonate of copper. This obtained honourable mention in the International Exhibition of 1862. It was while working these deposits at Bembe that the King of Congo came down to pay a visit, and was received with all honours. A very curious letter from this king, asking for a "piece of soap to wash his clothes with," is now in the possession of the British Museum.

It was during his stay at Bembe, and while exploring the country round, that he discovered that the fibre of the *Adansonia digitata* was so valuable for the purposes of making paper, but it was not until 1865 that he returned to the coast for the purpose of developing this extraordinary discovery. He continued to work this enterprise for many years, so as to fully establish the claim of this fibre to being the most valuable natural product for paper-making. Paper made exclusively of this fibre is scarcely to be distinguished from parchment, and it is owing to this remarkable quality that a small percentage of the fibre enables the manufacturer to utilise substances which would be otherwise useless. While at Bembe Mr. Monteiro procured some of the most interesting birds, and although the results of his first collecting were perhaps not so important in regard to novelties as those made later on, the value of this, our first contribution to the avifauna of Inner Angola, will never be underrated by ornithologists. In September, 1866, he accompanied Mr. A. A. Silva, the United States Consul, on an ascent of the River Quanza for the purpose of opening up the country to trade, and the natives were greatly astonished at their first experience of a "smoke-vessel." In April, 1873, he had the brothers Grandy as his guests at Ambriz, and supplied them with beads and goods for the arduous undertaking assigned to them by the Royal Geographical Society, of endeavouring to discover the sources of the River Congo, and of aiding Livingstone should he cross the continent and make for the West Coast. Mr. Monteiro accompanied the brothers Grandy five days inland. He explored the Congo as far as Porto da Lenho, in a steamer belonging to a Dutch house at the mouth of the river; and it was while on this expedition that he met by appointment, and at their desire, nine kings of Boma, whose curiosity he greatly excited by being the owner, as they said, of the first white woman, his wife, they had ever seen, and from her hand the kings were greatly pleased to receive a "dash" or present.

Mr. Monteiro was honoured with the friendship of Dr. Livingstone, who strongly desired him to accompany his expedition as mineralogist, but this wish he could not accede to, owing to his engagements in working out the fibre-scheme on the West Coast. His researches in the natural history of Angola have been of great importance to science. Among the many botanical specimens which he forwarded to England may be mentioned the plant and flowers of *Welwitschia mirabilis*, from which Sir Joseph Hooker was enabled to compile his splendid monograph of this extraordinary plant; besides many parasites, orchids, &c., which have been named after him. Perhaps the most interesting animal discovered by him was the beautiful little lemur (*Galago monteiri*), and the well-known chimpanzee, "Joe," which lived so long in the Zoological Gardens, was also brought to England by him. His second collection of birds was described by Dr. Hartlaub in 1865, and contained many new species, the most interesting of which were a Hornbill (*Tockus monteiri*) and a Bustard (*Otis picturata*), while he also procured a living specimen of the splendid Plantain-eater (*Corythaix livingstonii*) discovered by Dr. Livingstone in the Zambesi country.

Mr. Monteiro's eighth, and, as it has unfortunately proved, his last, visit to Africa, was one to Delagoa Bay, and here he expired, after a severe illness, on the 6th of January last. In company with his wife, who contributed so largely to his natural history collections, at which she worked with equal courage and zeal, he had set himself to develop the mineral and natural products of that Portuguese possession, and had already sent to England many valuable specimens, when his untimely death put an end