

her lofty breed from destruction, just as the top of a parsley sprig does for the swallows. This stone worn by a woman round her neck during pregnancy will procure her a living child."

This use of parsley is mentioned by Ælianus *de Natura Animal.* lib. i. chap. 37, as follows:—

Αἱ σίλφαι καὶ τούτων τὰ ἄ ἀδικούσιν οὐκοῦν αἱ μητέρες σελλίνου κέρην προβάλλονται τῶν βρεφῶν καὶ ἐκείναις τὸ ἐντεῦθεν ἕβρατά ἐστίν.

"As the beetles injure their eggs the mothers throw tops of parsley sprigs in front of their young, which become inaccessible to the beetles."

But this parsley must not be confounded with the miraculous herb giving sight to the young swallows. (Ælianus, lib. iii. chap. 25).

Βραδέος δὲ ἐκβλέπει καὶ τὰ ταύτης βρέφη ὡς καὶ τὰ τῶν κυνῶν σκυλάκια· πῶν δὲ κομίζει καὶ προσάγει τὰ δὲ ἀναβλέπει εἶτα ἀτρεμήσαντα ὀλιγὸν ἐκπετήσιμα ἕντα πρόβεισι τῆς καλίας ἐπὶ τὴν νομήν. ταύτης τῆς πῶας ἀνθρώποι γινέσθαι ἐγκρατεῖς διψῶσι· καὶ οὐδέπω νῦν τῆς σπουδῆς κατέτυχον.

"Like whelps, the young swallows are late endowed with sight, but on the application of a certain herb by their mother they begin to see; and after some rest leave the nest to seek their food. Men, though longing for this herb, could never get it."

Dionysius gives in his "Ornithology" some information about this eagle's stone (lib. i. ch. 3).

Ἦν δὲ ἀποτεκὼν δὴ κομιάσαντες τινα λίθον ταῖς κοίλαις ἐντιθέασι καλίας ἴνα ἐν καρῷ τίκτωσι, καὶ μὴ τὸ τικτόμενον πρὸ τῆς ὄρας ἀπέλεστον ὄθοιτο ὑπ' ἰσχύος· οὐ μὴν ἐστὶ τί σαφὲς περὶ τοῦ λίθου τούτου γινώσκουσιν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν Καυκασίων ὄρων οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ ἄκανοῦ ὄχθης φασὶ κομίζεσθαι λευκὸν ὑπερφύως ἕντα καὶ πᾶσιν ἔνδοθεν πνεύματος ὡς καὶ ἔχον ἀποτελεῖν εἰ κινῶτο, τικτούση δ' εἰ τις αὐτὸν γυναικί περιάψει, δλισθαίνειν διακαλώσσει τὸ βρέφος, κἄν ἐνλέβηται παφλάζοντος ὕδατος ἐπιψαύσῃ τὴν τοῦ πυρὸς νικήσει πάντω ἰσχύον.

"They bring this stone in their nests to avoid a premature and forcible delivery. Nothing positive is known about this stone, which some suppose brought from the Caucasus, and others from the sea-shore. It is exceedingly white, full of air, so as to resound when moved. It prevents miscarriage in those who wear it. And if it does but touch the surface of a caldron of boiling water, it overpowers entirely the might of fire."

The confusion made by some writers between swallows and eagles is evident by the fact of their faulty quotation from Pliny.

For Pliny, chap. iv. lib. x. says—

"Tribus primis et quinto aquilarum generi inædificatur nido lapis ætites quem aliqui dixere gangitem ad multa remedia utilis nihil igne deperdens. Est autem lapis iste prægnans intus, cum quatias alio velut in utero sonante. Sed vis illa medica non nisi nido direptis."

And in chap. xxxix. vol. 36, he gives further particulars on these very stones, which he divides into males and females, and into four kinds, according to their origin.

Whilst in lib. viii. chap. 41, he says—

"Chelidonium visui saluberrimum hirundines monstraverunt vexatis pullorum oculis illa medentes," and lib. xxv. ch. 50, "Animalia quoque invenerunt herbas, in primis que chelidonium. Hac enim hirundines oculis pullorum in nido restituant visum ut quidam volunt [see Aristotle *de Animal. Gen.* l. iv. ch. 6] etiam crutis oculis"; clearly tracing the distinction followed by Philé between the respective proficiency of eagles in geology and swallows in botany.

Jersey

CHATEL

### A Peat Bed in the Drift of Oldham

WE have here lately discovered a bed of peat intercalated with beds of undisturbed "glacial drift." I believe this phenomenon, if not unique, is very rare in England, and may, therefore, be interesting to your readers. In the depth of a section of 14 feet there are two thick beds of drift with washings of fine clay, and, midway in the section, a well defined bed of peat with a maximum thickness of 18 inches. Another bed of peat, somewhat less clearly defined, and not so true as the former, is likewise present, the two beds having beneath them a thin band of exceedingly fine clay of a bluish grey colour, which evidently is the equivalent of the "seatings" or "floor clays," which so invariably accompany our seams of coal. The beds of drift that inclose the peat are alike in some of their main features, but unlike in others. In both boulders are in great abundance.

In the bed beneath the peat there are bands of fine clay, coarse sand, or grit, pebbles, and boulders; the upper, with very little variation, is uniformly made up of arenaceous clay and a great number of boulders. It is almost certain that at the close of the pleistocene period the upper deposit, that is, the one above the peat, could not have had a thickness of less than 75 feet. These deposits are the "upper drift" of the geologist. The beds beneath the peat, judging from their composition—boulders, pebbles, gravel, and fine sand—and the presence in the latter of "current bedding," probably represent the "middle drift." The "lower drift" beds are absent here. May I add that some of the mosses, which seem to make up the bulk of the peat, are in an excellent state of preservation, and are now under examination for identification. A considerable number of fragments of beetles, of undetermined species, are likewise amongst the finds.

JAS. NIELD

29, Radclyffe Street, Oldham, September 13

### On the Asiatic Alliances of the Fauna of the Congenian Deposits of South-Eastern Europe

HERR THEODOR FUCHS of Vienna has pointed out some important mistakes in the abstracts of his memoir in *NATURE*, vol. xxi. p. 528. In view of remedying these regrettable errors some revised extracts are here given. At p. 528, line 32, the passage should read thus:—"The genus *Veritina* at present shows a predilection for islands. Thus from Tahiti alone Reeve gives 8 species, and 11 from the Sandwich Islands; from the Philippines there are 39, and 40 from New Caledonia alone, according to Gassies. Further, according to Kobelt there are 11 in the Mediterranean; and, according to Reeve, 7 in the West Indies, and 10 in Central America. The great continental areas are strangely poor in *Veritina*. In North America the genus seems to be wanting, since the two or three known species are found only in the borderlands on the south. The genus *Melanopsis* has a very peculiar distribution. Twenty species, nearly all strongly ornamented, belong to the Mediterranean. This genus is wanting in Africa, East India, the Malay Islands, Australia, and the whole of America; but it occurs quite locally, with 19 species, in New Caledonia; and 2 species are found in New Zealand."

Again, at line 60, read:—"A very peculiar characteristic, hitherto overlooked, in the inland-water faunas of the later tertiaries in South Europe, is the absence of the African element (such as the *Achatina*, *Etheria*, *Ampullaria*, *Iridina*, *Galatea*, &c.); and this is the more remarkable because the mammalian fauna of the period, on the contrary, has a strongly-pronounced African character. The same may be said of the flora and for the whole tertiary period, since the tertiary flora of Europe had, in succession, an Australian, Indian, Japanese, and Mediterranean character, but never an African character. The tertiary land and freshwater shells of Europe show analogies to New Caledonia, India, China, and Japan, but not to Africa; although the last not only lies so very much nearer to our continent, but in its mammalian fauna, until the Diluvial period, kept so close a connection with Southern Europe."

T. R. J.

### Prosopistoma punctifrons

My colleagues, Messrs. Joly and Vayssière, in announcing with justifiable pride (in the *Comptes Rendus* of the French Academy and elsewhere) the discovery of the perfect insect of *Prosopistoma*, attribute to me the former possession of an opinion that the insect might be an Ephemeroidea suited for a continuous aquatic life. I am not sensible of having published such an opinion, nor of having held it. In remarks on *Oniscogaster*, in the *Journal* of the Linnean Society of London, vol. xii. (Zoology) p. 145, footnote (1873), I ask, "Can there be apterous *Ephemeroidea*?" and "Can the imago of *Prosopistoma* be in that condition?" It did not occur to me that these words could be so translated as to bear the interpretation put upon them by Messrs. Joly and Vayssière. In congratulating my colleagues upon their discovery, I remark that I make this explanation solely because certain of my correspondents ask where I have published the opinion attributed to me.

R. McLACHLAN

Lewisham, September 9

### Mosquitoes

IN *NATURE*, vol. xxii. p. 338, an inquiry is made as to the best means of preventing the attacks of mosquitoes. I am