

The mangrove has established itself on the edges of the lagoon, doubtless from seed transported by the currents, and, in all places where it has done so, tortuous creeks or little gorges run back into the coral, filled with mangrove trees (standing in deep mud of the adhesive and foetid nature so characteristic of mangrove swamps), which stretch out their roots to the coral walls around them, and, as it seemed indubitably to me, in some way decompose the softer parts and eat their way in. The island is riddled with these creeks, always filled with mangrove, and opening into the lagoon.

The outer face of the island is of course being slowly undermined by the sea at high water, presenting overhanging cliffs impossible to scale, and the island is wearing away from that cause also, but the destruction from the mangrove is much more important, and at no very distant period, as it seemed to me, the upraised island will be again reduced to its original level as an ordinary atoll.

It would be interesting to know how long the mangrove has been there, for as Aldabra is one of the two oceanic groups in which the giant tortoises still exist indigenous, it must have been in its present condition of upraised atoll, I imagine, for a long period. It could never have been much larger in diameter, from the soundings round it, but the mangrove may have greatly increased the size of the lagoon by steady working at the inner rim of the islands, the actual area of which is now but small, from their narrowness.

I may mention that the island is covered with low, tangled scrub, which has managed to find foothold and sustenance on the rock, for there is but little or no soil, and the top of the rock is everywhere cut up by sub-aërial action into the sharp, honeycombed, and jagged surface which upraised coral in the tropics, uncovered by grasses, soil, &c., always wears into, and which, by the way, makes it extremely difficult to walk over, a difficulty much increased in this instance by these mangrove channels, as well as the tough nature of the matted, thorny bushes. A walk in Aldabra is the most aggravating and slowest piece of locomotion I have ever engaged in: and nothing short of the patience, perseverance, and general disregard of time of the tortoise tribe can make it an agreeable residence. Some of my negro sailors were sent into the bush to hunt for tortoises, and after three days' search brought back one, which is now in the Gardens of the Zoological Society; but they returned nearly as guiltless of artificial clothing as their captive.

W. J. L. WHARTON

H.M.S. *Sylvia*, Monte Video, October 10

#### The "Cloud-Glow" of November 9

THE beautiful after-glow of Friday, the 9th instant, was most striking as seen from the west side of Hampstead Hill, where its first development was made more effective by a frame of dark cumulus, with a fringe of dusky green tint, carried up from the sunset quarter by a westerly breeze, rather rolled up like a curtain, exhibiting the richly-coloured scene behind as it was withdrawn. I estimated the altitude of the upper edge of the glow at about 30°; but at Freshwater, Isle of Wight, it has been described as extending nearly to the zenith. There would be no difficulty in calculating approximately the height of the cirrus—as desired by Mr. Russell—if it could be assumed that the reflection was from the same matter in both cases, which is improbable.

J. J. WALKER

#### Waking Impressions

A CURIOUS case I have just read in a recent number of NATURE recalls a somewhat similar experience of my own, rather earlier in date. I awoke in the middle of a story told by an internal voice—a voice felt, not heard. I listened with curiosity and interest, as totally unprepared for what was coming as if the narrator had been Gladstone or Ruskin. I believe when I awoke I had a dim recollection of what had gone before, but I strove afterwards in vain to recall it. All I know of the history of the mysterious lady is the following fragment: "She had many admirers, but she gave the preference to Tom, because he promised to marry her in the West Indian fashion. He drew her three times through a hoop, once standing, once sitting, once lying, which signified that he would never desert her in youth, maturity, or old age."

I have not the least idea who "she" was. I know no one I call Tom except an old schoolfellow long married, and, to

the best of my belief, I never heard of such a custom in the West Indies or elsewhere. Once since I have waked in the middle of a dream which went on, but it was a dream of a very commonplace character.

WILLIAM RADFORD

Sidmouth

#### Barytes from Chirbury

I AM indebted to Mr. Yelland of Wotherton for sending me some fine examples of the crystals described by Mr. Miers in NATURE, vol. xxix. p. 29, and am collecting several particulars respecting their occurrence. Some time ago I commenced a determination of the faces, but my work has been interrupted.

The characteristic plane E is mentioned by Carl Urba (Groth, *Zeitschrift für Crystallographie*, v. 433, 1881) as occurring on barytes crystals from Swoszawice in Galizien. In a measurement I made last year to determine this plane on one of the Wotherton specimens I obtained E E' as 39° 59', and, using Miller's distance for *bd* leads to the symbol 412, and by calculation the distance *aE* as 26° 2'. Carl Urba gives its calculated distance as 26° 4', and measured distance as 25° 58'.

C. J. WOODWARD

Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham, Nov. 10

#### "Salt Rain and Dew"

LOOKING over the "School Geography" of Dr. Clyde (Edinburgh, 1870), I find, on page 32, in the paragraph headed "Russian Lakes," the following remarkable statement:—"In the south-east region, not only the lakes, but the very rain and dew likewise are salt, a phenomenon common to all the shores of the Caspian and Sea of Aral" (the italics are mine). Will some one of your readers kindly refer me to the traveller's tale in which this myth originated.

HARRY N. DRAPER

Esterel, Temple Road, Dublin, November 17.

#### AN INDIAN WEATHER FORECAST

THE period of drought in Upper India, which happily came to an end in the latter part of August, was not entirely unforeseen, as will be shown by the following extracts from the *Government Gazette*; and the facts will probably be not without interest to meteorologists in Europe and elsewhere.

Extract from the "Gazette of India" of June 2, 1883

"That the unusually dry weather now prevailing over the North-Western Himalaya, and that which, though less abnormal, characterises the whole of North-Western India at the present time, is an effect of the unusual accumulation of snow, is a conclusion justified by the experience of the last few years; and were it not that the snow is rapidly decreasing under the unobstructed radiation of the sun, there might be some reason, judging from the present limited experience, to anticipate some retardation of the rains of the Upper Provinces, and possibly even in Western India generally. But, on the other hand, the fact that, during the months of April and May, the atmospheric pressure over the greater part of the country has been below the normal average of the season, is one which, arguing from the same experience, portends favourably for the timely influx of the monsoon. In Bengal it may be said that the present prospects are wholly favourable.

(Signed) "HENRY F. BLANFORD,  
Meteorological Reporter to the  
Government of India

"Simla, May 18, 1883"

"Since the above was written, there has been heavy rain for many days on the outer hills, and more or less on the plains of the Punjab, and apparently a very heavy fall of snow on the higher ranges. At the present time, as seen from Simla, the latter are white with snow, down to a level of about 11,000 or 12,000 feet. And some 500 feet of the top of the Chor (11,982 feet) is also covered with a snow-cap. If, therefore, the mountains of Lalwul, Spiti, and