

appearance filled the entire flask. The spectrum of these flames shows no lines in any case. They are all continuous. The largest crystals of platinum were obtained with the  $\text{ICl}_3$ . Bromide of iodine behaved like iodine.

We have tried a number of other substances in a similar manner. Oxygen, sulphur, sulphur dioxide, nitric oxide, mercury vapour gave negative results as far as we could see. With hydrochloric acid some  $\text{PtCl}_2$  was formed, but no flame appearance. Phosphoric chloride gave a slight flame, and some  $\text{PtCl}_2$ ; but phosphorus is liberated, and then unites with the platinum, melting it. A current of very dry hydrogen fluoride was passed through the flask; before the wire was ignited no action on the glass of the flask was apparent, but almost immediately on passing the current the glass became much corroded by, probably, liberated fluorine. Owing to the flask breaking, we cannot say if platinous fluoride was formed.

With silicon fluoride a singular action took place, the wire, especially the negative half, becoming covered with long semi-transparent crystals of, we think, silicon. The silicon fluoride was very dry, and passed for a long time through the flask without any action until the wire was ignited, when simultaneously with the production of these crystals the glass vessel became much corroded. A small quantity of a soluble platinum salt was formed at the same time. We are continuing these experiments.

We do not think the platinum salts formed in this way are simply shot out by "volcanic" action, as they are quite uniformly spread over the sides of the glass vessel, and seem to be really volatile at the temperature and under the conditions. We have failed to find any record of platinum salts being volatile when heated under ordinary conditions, but it is probable that in the presence of free halogen they would be volatile.

Whether there be any true electrolytic action in these cases we are not at the moment prepared to say.

Royal Military Academy. W. R. HODGKINSON.

#### "The Nervous System and the Mind."

WILL you allow me to account for one or two of the discrepancies in my book which your very able reviewer points out in the current issue of NATURE?

He cannot reconcile the statement that "everyone nowadays admits that the evolution of mind and the evolution of the nervous system have proceeded *pari passu*, and are indeed but two aspects of the same process," with the further statement that "this way of studying them is so greatly neglected, is indeed derided and scouted." It is pointed out, however, in the passage from which he quotes, that the latter charge is laid at the door of my brother alienists only; while the former statement applies to psychologists at large.

Were it worth while, I could substantiate my charge by chapter and verse, but as the general movement is at last beginning in the direction I advocate, to do so would be to cause the cry from the wilderness to approximate too much to the character of the voice of chanticleer.

Your reviewer states, as if in contravention of my doctrine, that "experienced alienists tell us they find it necessary to admit a moral insanity with an average amount of intelligence." This I have never denied. My position is not that in "moral insanity" intelligence is deficient in amount. What I say is, that in "moral insanity" intelligence is always *disordered*. Disorder of intelligence is very different from deficiency of intelligence.

CHAS. MERCIER.

Canford, S.E., April 23.

I AM glad that Dr. Mercier has found so little to complain of in the review of his recent work. I am bound to accept his explanation of the discrepancy I ventured to point out, although, on re-reading the two apparently antagonistic passages again, I do not find the distinction between psychologists and alienists, to which he now refers, clearly stated. The expression "everyone" (p. 4) appears to include both. Dr. Mercier's "brother alienists" are, it seems, excluded from the class that can grasp the truth that the evolution of mind and the nervous system are but two aspects of the same process, and belong to that uninformed class that "deride and scout" it. I certainly should have hesitated to understand this to be the author's meaning, but, being so, I must leave his benighted *confrères* to settle their account with him. They may perchance think that in this reading of the passage, "the voice of chanticleer" has already become associated with the *vox clamantis* in the wilderness!

In regard to the association of moral insanity with an average amount of intellect, I would only observe that the brother alienists of Dr. Mercier, including Dr. Maudsley, contend that, not only may this be met with, but that moral insanity may co-exist with an undisturbed intelligence. Dr. Mercier's contention that "in moral insanity intelligence is always disordered" would therefore be still in conflict with the experience of some experienced alienists, which was the position I took.

Both these points, however, are only small matters compared with the general subject-matter of the work under review, and I repeat that it is gratifying to find there does not appear to have been any important mis-statement of Dr. Mercier's views in the friendly criticism of

THE REVIEWER.

April 24.

#### Nose-Blackening as Preventive of Snow-Blindness.

MY friend Mr. Edmund J. Power sends me the following account of what appears to me to be an interesting fact. I should like to obtain suggestions from physiologists as to the possible explanation of the phenomenon, on the assumption that the blackening of the nose and eyelids really does prevent the injurious action of sunlight on the eyes; and further, I should like to know whether (quite apart from the fact of its utility or futility) the custom has possibly a remote origin in some ceremony or ritual.

E. RAY LANKESTER.

"Can you or some of your friends explain the following?"

"When in Colorado shooting the end of last year, my friend had a very bad attack of snow-blindness, caused by a long march on snow with bright sun. My eyes also were very bad the next day and caused much pain.

"Some days after I was under similar circumstances, when my guide stopped, and taking some burnt wood from a stump blackened his nose and under the eyes well down on the cheek-bone.

"On asking him the reason, he told me it stopped snow-blindness, and as the glare was very strong I did the same, and found immediate relief.

"I did this all the time I was out, and never found the snow affect my eyes in any way.

"Everyone I spoke to about it could give no reason for it, but all used it on the march. Some use glasses, but, as my man remarked, 'glasses cost dollars, dirt nothing.'

"Perhaps some of your friends can enlarge on the subject, as it is of great interest to me, and may be so to Alpine people, as glasses are hot to climb in, and from my own experience it is not easy to stalk in glasses and then take them off and shoot."

#### "Antagonism."

THE author of "The Correlation of the Physical Forces" has, I am sure, our sympathy when he relates how he has been forestalled by Prof. Huxley.

As Sir William Grove subsequently says that "it is always useful to know the truth," he will, perhaps, excuse my suggesting that his views upon antagonism as pervading the universe have been anticipated in a work published more than a quarter of a century ago. I allude to "First Principles," and more especially to the chapter in it upon "The Rhythm of Motion," in which the effects of antagonist forces are shown to be everywhere present, and are copiously illustrated and expounded from the stand-points of astronomy, geology, biology, psychology, and sociology. After reading this chapter, and especially its concluding sentence—"Given the co-existence everywhere of antagonist forces, a postulate which, as we have seen, is necessitated by the form of our experience"—we cannot, I think, but add another eminent name to that of Prof. Huxley as anticipating Sir W. Grove: it is that of Mr. Herbert Spencer.

F. HOWARD COLLINS.

Churchfield, Edgbaston, April 29.

#### Sense of Taste.

THE curious difference between male and female observers in detecting feeble traces of quinine, sugar, acid, &c., in water as mentioned in NATURE on p. 557 (vol. xxxvii.), is possibly owing to the sense of taste being injured in the males by the use of tobacco.

I have had occasion to apply delicate tests of smell and taste, and I find that even moderate smokers are unable to detect odours and tastes that are quite distinct to non-smokers.

Dunstable.

W. G. S.