

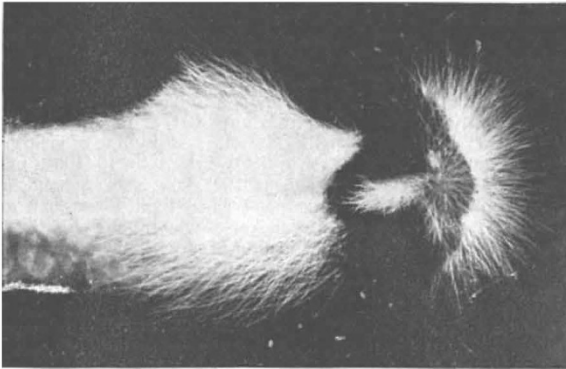
The momentary gleams of the electric light-play can be very easily observed by holding an albumen paper print thoroughly well self-dried on glass, paper side downwards, in a perfectly dark room over a hot room-stove to produce the paper's separation, and by stripping the print off downwards as soon as some edge of it has grown loose enough—probably with some signs of light—to allow it to be taken in the fingers. I have by this means now seen those brush and glow lights' flitting beams a second time, and there seems to be no difficulty of producing them in varied form and brightness by this method of proceeding.

A. S. HERSCHEL.

Observatory House, Slough, December 10.

#### Photography of the Static Discharge.

The accompanying photograph of the spark of a large static machine may possibly be of some interest to the readers of NATURE. The machine is a large Holtz, used in the electrical department of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. It consists of eight glass plates of twenty-nine inches in diameter, inclosed in a glass case. It is driven by a motor which is worked by the 100 volt alternating main which supplies the electrical department with its alternating current. The initial charge is obtained from a small Voss machine which is inclosed in the case of the Holtz. The photograph was obtained in the following manner. The machine was started and the brass knobs of the conductors adjusted to give a spark of about seven inches in length. The knobs were now tested in the usual way (by presenting a metallic point to the conductors) with reference to the



sign of their charge. A gelatine dry plate was then taken, inclosed firstly in an orange and then in a black envelope. The plate was placed between the knobs of the conductors in a line parallel with them and the sparks allowed to play over the envelope for a period of one second of time. The plate was then taken to the dark-room, developed and fixed in the ordinary way. The accompanying illustration shows the curious results obtained. A distinct break can be seen in the continuity of the sparks between the positive and negative poles. Round the positive pole the sparks are rushing off in a dense mass with a direction from the negative pole of the machine. At the line of separation of this dense mass of sparks is seen a depression as if the mass had been eroded by the negative charge, reminding one very forcibly of what happens to the positive carbon of the arc light. At the negative pole the sparks are much less dense and more fan-shaped, and radiate in the reverse direction to the positive sparks with the exception of a cone of sparks, which are much smaller, which approach the depression in the positive mass. This prolongation of small sparks towards the positive pole is seen in each of the photographs obtained. The results of the experiment are curious. I am unable to explain them, but think they are perhaps worthy of record.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

HUGH WALSHAM.

#### Malaria and Mosquitoes.

As I was reading the very interesting article by Dr. Fielding-Ould on the "Malaria Campaign," which appeared in NATURE of November 8, I was struck by the fact that the use of the mosquito-netting he suggests as an efficacious preventive against

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malaria fever was already arrived at several years ago through nothing but experience in one of the malaria districts in Syria. The following is a translation of a letter published in vol. viii. (April 1884) of the *Muktataf*, an Arabic literary and scientific review, edited in Cairo, Egypt, by Drs. Sarruf and Nimr:—

"To the Editors of *Al-Muktataf*.

"GENTLEMEN,—I have already had the chance of observing the spread of the malaria fever in Rashiya, both in the autumns of 1878 and 1883, and I noticed that one of the principal agents in effecting its spread was the mosquito. I have also noticed that all those who, at the time of the epidemic, took precautions against the mosquito bites escaped the fever, a fact well known in this part of the country. I therefore conclude that mosquito nets which completely cover the bed and prevent the entrance of mosquitoes are the best fever preventives in countries abounding in malaria marshes.

ABDELLA JABBOUR,

Rashiya.

Trusting the above will find a place in your esteemed paper,  
N. Y. SARRUF.

Cairo, December 7.

#### Can Spectroscopic Analysis Furnish us with Precise Information as to the Petrography of the Moon?

THEORETICALLY I think we may reply in the affirmative, but whether our means of observation are, as yet, delicate enough to give us trustworthy results I leave to the investigation of our readers.

As the question is of considerable interest, pardon me if I enter somewhat into detail.

(1) If we had two smooth, plane, parallel mirrors, perfectly elastic, and a gas jet midway between them, we might first light the gas and then extinguish it without destroying the illumination, for, if the mirrors were perfectly elastic, the waves of light would oscillate between the two for ever with undiminished intensity. We know that this is not the case, therefore no known substance is perfectly elastic.

(2) If direct solar light fall upon a large mass of sandstone, part of it penetrates the mass as heat, and part is reflected, with a diminished velocity, so that we might expect, *a priori*, an apparent displacement of the Fraunhofer lines, as compared with the spectrum of direct sunlight.

(3) Similar results might be looked for with regard to limestone, basalt, &c., but not identical, unless we make the very improbable supposition that all solids are equally elastic.

(4) Hence it should be possible to construct a table of relative photo-elasticities so that if the substance were given its elasticity might be found by inspection, and *vice versa*.

(5) Next, analysing the sunlight reflected from various regions of the moon, and referring to our table, we might hope for answers to the questions

(a) Are Tycho, Copernicus and the Appenines basaltic?

(b) Is the Mare Tranquillitatis the dried-up limestone bed of a saltwater ocean, or the dried-up sandstone bed of a freshwater inland sea?

I admit, at once, that the observations suggested are of extreme delicacy, but I cannot consider them insurmountable in an age which has witnessed the proof of the regression and subsequent approach of Sirius to the solar system by this very method.

W. J. KNIGHT.

Cork.

#### INTERNATIONAL CATALOGUE OF SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE.

AT the International Conference which met in London last June to discuss this subject, it was thought that the time had arrived when the great work of publishing a complete catalogue of all the scientific literature of the world might be undertaken with every prospect of success.

A Provisional International Committee was, therefore, appointed at the Conference to carry out the preliminary work, and this Committee reported the results of its labours to an International Council which met last week in the rooms of the Royal Society.