

Indian Land Mollusca.

I AM sorry that my offer of the Indian operculate land-snails in the collection of the Indian Museum did not reach Sir Arthur Shiple. The offer had the support of the Government of India, which wrote strongly to the India Office as to the unfortunate effect of publishing Mr. Gude's volume without reference to the Indian Museum collection.

I fail, however, to see what the war has to do with the case, and prefer to ignore Sir Arthur Shiple's motive in his attempt to introduce it in his letter in NATURE of October 27 (p. 271). The volume in question was published in 1921, and was, I understand, completed shortly before it was published. I received official information that it was in active progress from the Education Department of the Government of India only in the latter part of last year. My offer was made in reference to this communication through the channel through which I had received it.

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Curiosities of Nomenclature.

AT Section D of the British Association in two successive years I asked for an explanation of the generic name Calymene, without obtaining it from a roomful of zoologists. On the second occasion I suggested, among other guesses, the remote possibility of a derivation from the Greek word *κεκαλυμμένη*. Since then, while consulting Buckland's *Bridgewater Treatise* of 1836 for quite another purpose, I have found (vol. 1, p. 371) a footnote on genera of Trilobites giving "Calymene, from *κεκαλυμμένη*, concealed," with Buckland's comment that such names were "devised expressly to denote the obscure nature of the bodies to which they are attached."

Nearly half a century after the date of Brongniart's genus the American carcinologist Packard named a genus *Cæcidotæa* (if I may trust Scudder's "Nomenclator Zoologicus," vol. 1, p. 52, and vol. 2, p. 47), thus implicitly assigning his blind isopod to the family Idoteidæ in the Valvifera away from its proper place among the Asellidæ. Harger in 1878 spells the name *Cæcidotea* (U.S. Fish. Comm., part 6, p. 314). Now Dr. Tattersall, with the spelling *Cæcidothea* (Mem. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, vol. 6, p. 417, 1921), records a new species of the genus from a shallow domestic well in Japan, and observes that "this species is distinguished at once from all the other species of the genus by the presence of distinct, though very small, eyes." Thus we have in Packard's professedly blind Idoteid genus a species which is not an Idoteid and which is not blind. Apart, however, from obvious misnomers, the endeavour to pack a budget of information into a single descriptive name must often fail, because it cannot be foreseen that any character noted in the generic name will prove of more than specific value.

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The Flight of Thistledown.

PROF. MILES WALKER'S letter in NATURE of October 20 recalls an incident observed during a holiday in the Cheviots in June last which may possibly be of interest in connection with his inquiry.

It was June 24, the hottest day of the year up to that date, and with brilliant sunshine. The air was comparatively still but for the quivering due to the heat, and there was no distinct current. Our attention was arrested by what to all appearance was a dragon-fly hovering 5 or 6 ft. from the ground, and

frequently darting a foot or two away. This went on for probably a minute or two, until, in fact, we caught the object for the purpose of finding out what it was. It proved to be a thread of thistledown or something akin to it, and probably an inch and a quarter or more in length.

It was, perhaps, an insignificant occurrence, but the effect was certainly curious and striking. The tiny film very effectually simulated the flight of a dragon-fly, and would, I think, have deceived all but a practised observer. Whatever current there might be was negligible, and the movement—or the stationary quivering attitude—seemed quite independent of it.

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October 28.

THE rising of plant-down on calm, sunny days as described by Prof. Miles Walker in NATURE of October 20, p. 242, has also been noticed by me occasionally. But could not the upward motion be explained by an upward current of air? We know that the air is usually full of eddies on a hot afternoon. In order to prove that the thistledown moved through, instead of with, the air, it would be necessary to make simultaneous and contiguous measurements of air-motion by means of smoke or of some very special anemometer. It would be interesting to learn if anyone has tried such an experiment.

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Ceratium and Pedalion.

IN recently announcing (NATURE, September 8, p. 42) the finding of *Ceratium* in this district, I assumed, on the authority of Kent's "Manual of the Infusoria," that the species was *C. furca*. By the kindness of Herr Lektor E. Jørgensen, author of a monograph on the genus *Ceratium*, who has examined some specimens, I am now enabled to correct the impression unwittingly given by my letter, and to state that the forms found by me are varieties of *Ceratium hirundinella*. My error is, perhaps, a pardonable one in view of the marked differences between the actual organism and Kent's illustration of *C. hirundinella*, and the general correspondence of the specimens found with his description, etc., of *C. furca*.

With regard to *Pedalion mirum*, no information has yet reached me that this rotifer has, during the past thirty-two years, been found at places in Great Britain other than the three mentioned in Hudson and Gosse's work on "The Rotifera."

A. E. HARRIS.

44 Partridge Road, Cardiff, October 20.

Muscular Piezo-electricity?

THE well-known "action current" of muscle can have nothing to do with piezo-electricity, since it may reach its maximum before any mechanical change begins. Nor do I see anything to suggest the occurrence of such electricity in other animal tissues or organs. Mr. Wriothesley Russell (NATURE, October 27, p. 275) might, however, find plants worth investigating for evidence of it. I directed attention sixteen years ago to the association of crystals with electrical changes in *Desmodium gyrans* (Proc. Physiol. Soc., July, 1905), and (according to a short notice in NATURE for August 11, 1921) Steckbeck has shown their association with propagation of stimuli in *Mimosa pudica*, *Biophytum sensitivum*, and other sensitive plants.

F. BUCHANAN.

University Museum, Oxford, October 31.