

In 1918 pupæ of *Selenia bitumaria* Esp. were obtained from Kent, and broods resulting from these reared at Birtley on hawthorn from the roadside. In the following year the spring brood, the second lot fed at Birtley, gave a batch of moths containing a large number of typical insects, several melanochroic forms together with two insects uniformly leaden black. A black female was paired with an unrelated typical male, and F<sub>1</sub> and F<sub>2</sub> generations secured; the results suggested that the melanism was recessive, as in the allied moth *Ennomos quercinaria* Hufn. Another batch of ova was obtained from a typical wild Abbot's Wood (Sussex) female in July 1921, and after two generations had been reared at Birtley, eggs were sent to Hexham. Some of the larvæ were fed on prepared hawthorn, the salts used being lead nitrate and manganese sulphate. The moths emerging in the spring of 1923 showed no particular variation, but were paired, and the treatment continued. The summer brood proved extremely interesting. The controls began to show the effects of inbreeding, only 12 moths resulting from 60 eggs, and 3 of these were dwarfs; but there was no melanism. From one batch of larvæ fed on hawthorn containing lead nitrate 12 males and 15 females were bred; all were of normal size, but 1 male was practically black. Another such batch gave 20 males and 11 females, 1 male again being melanic. A fourth section, reared on hawthorn charged with a manganese salt, yielded 11 males and 9 females; these displayed both melanism and melanochroism, 6 males and 2 females being of the black type, whilst insects absolutely typical were practically absent. All of these melanic forms are fairly uniform in colour, showing no markings except an almost white line such as is so common a feature of melanic lepidoptera.

In partnership with Mrs. Garrett, one of us recently directed attention in these columns to the effect of lead on *Smerinthus ocellatus*, and the same workers have now tried it with *Amorpha populi*, the eggs originating with a wild Hexham female. The larvæ again fed up more rapidly, but whereas the *S. ocellatus* pupæ were heavier, those of *A. populi* were about 15 per cent. lighter than those of the controls. They were perfectly healthy, however, and moths were obtained from every pupa save one. Though there was no definite melanism, there was a tendency towards it, the colours being more intense and the markings more clearly defined; the difference was sufficiently great to enable one of us, who had not seen the moths before, to sort them correctly without any clue as to their history.

As the investigation is being continued, and the study of the inheritance of the induced melanism well in hand, we content ourselves with a mere statement of the facts; next summer we hope to be able to publish fuller details.

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July 27.

#### The Reported Meteorite at Quetta.

THE issue of NATURE of May 26, p. 704, contains a short communication from my Department correcting a report concerning the fall of a meteorite at Quetta. Further inquiries make it desirable that the opinion in that letter should be modified. Though no traces of a meteorite can be identified in the material collected, it does not necessarily follow that a meteorite did not fall.

During a storm at Quetta on the afternoon of January 25 last, a large ball of fire is reported to have fallen and struck a stack of baled *bhoosa* (chopped straw) in the Military Grass Farm Stack-yard. The

stack, composed of 12,800 bales, was for the most part consumed by fire, and amongst the ashes were found some three tons of a hard dark stone. Portions of this stone were forwarded to the laboratory of the Geological Survey and found to consist of slag, parts of which showed a ropy structure and slightly scoriaceous texture. As we were informed that no one had actually seen the fireball strike the stack, it was at first thought that the latter was ignited by a simple flash of lightning. Later information, however, makes it possible that a meteorite did actually fall into the *bhoosa* stack. Not only was the "ball of fire" witnessed by several people, but the men who were set to work on top of the stack extinguishing the fire immediately after its outbreak reported a hole in the stack 18 inches wide, and their observation was confirmed by Conductor Trehwella, who noticed that the hole led towards the centre of the stack.

The possible sequence of events may be reconstructed as follows: The *bhoosa* was struck and ignited either by a meteorite which burned its way to the base of the stack, or by a simple flash of lightning. The intense heat fused the iron bands binding the bales of *bhoosa*, and this iron combined with the silica in the *bhoosa* itself or with any mud roofing which may have been present. Mr. A. J. Gibson, of the Punjab Forest Service, has reminded me that the tissues of the Gramineæ contain an unusually large percentage of silica, and 12,000 bales would probably supply sufficient to form most of the three tons of slag, consisting of silicate of iron, free iron, and impurities.

The meteorite, if there were one, was itself probably of iron, and would have mixed with and become part of the fused slag. Unmelted fragments of the iron bands of the *bhoosa* bales were found in the cooler portions of the melt. In such circumstances it is of course impossible to identify any remains of a meteorite in the slag.

Geological Survey of India,  
Simla, July 9.

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#### Scientific Names of Greek Derivation.

IN NATURE for July 7, p. 10, Prof. Cole criticises "American authors" for using the term dinosaur, instead of clinging as he does to "deinosaur." In a previous number of NATURE (July 1, 1922, p. 21) the reviewer of an article on the Deinodontidæ takes the authors to task for not using "what is now considered the more correct rendering of the Greek, as Dinodontidæ." What can a poor American author do to be saved?

In fact, the usual custom among American and Canadian palæontologists has been to follow the rules of the International Code for names of genera and families, and otherwise adhere to the original spelling of scientific names, although some of us have had sufficient classical training to dislike having to use badly composed or wrongly transliterated names. Dinosauria was Owen's spelling of the word and Deinodontidæ is formed according to the rule from the radical of Leidy's genus as originally proposed.

While the rules and recommendations of the Code are a sufficient guide for future coining of names, its retroactive applications are not altogether clear, and it does not provide any definite guide for the spelling of the larger group names or other scientific terminology. Is there any scientific dictionary to which one could refer as internationally authoritative? Or could the matter be taken up by the next international congresses of zoology and geology?

W. D. MATHEW.

American Museum of Natural History,  
New York, July 17.