

have undertaken work of this kind will understand the difficulty of producing such a flawless work.

Besides pottery, Dr. Glaisher also collected arithmetical books of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and his collection is probably the most complete one in private possession in Great Britain. Dr. Glaisher, however, was no mere book collector, but read all his books (whatever the language), and to good purpose, as his articles in the *Messenger of Mathematics* amply show. One of these, "On the Early History of the Signs + and -, and on the Early German Arithmeticians" (1921-22), will prove a mine of information to historians of mathematics, who cannot possibly read all the books themselves. Dr. Glaisher had a keen sense of humour, which enabled him to enjoy the human interest found even in such supposedly dry books, and he would often express his amusement of the vinous questions and problems abounding in the works of Adam Riese and Stifel. His collection of mathematical books, as he informed me, he bequeathed to the library of his college.

This did not exhaust Dr. Glaisher's activity as a collector. Two other collections he formed and prized, both very far afield from the realms of science, but characteristic as showing his varied human interests. One was of children's books with movable figures, and the other (a very complete one) of valentines. But whether these also were left to Trinity College, Cambridge, I do not know.

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#### Stellar Spectra in the Far Ultra-Violet.

IN a letter to *NATURE* of Nov. 24, 1928, Cario suggested that in the region of arctic winter-night the 3000 Å. barrier of stellar spectroscopy may be absent, leaving a clear view down to 2100 Å., where absorption by ordinary oxygen molecules sets in. To test this idea I have made a trip to Honningsvåg, in northern Norway, the expenses being borne by the Government Research Fund of 1919. Honningsvåg is a small fishing-village in the vicinity of the North Cape (lat. 71°, long. 26° E. approximately). At this place the sun is constantly below the horizon from Nov. 20 to Jan. 23. I stayed there from Dec. 5 to Dec. 11. Being primarily interested in large-scale variations in the atmospheric transmission, I brought only a rather crude equipment, consisting of a small objective single prism quartz spectrograph equatorially mounted on tripod, with a 3-in. guiding telescope fitted with a hand-driven gear. The length of the spectrum obtained by this instrument is about 8 mm. from 5000 Å. to 3000 Å., and the dispersion at 3000 Å. about 100 Å. to a millimetre.

The principal result of the trip is that Cario's conjecture has thus far not been confirmed. I photographed the spectra of several early type stars having relatively much radiation in the ultra-violet ( $\alpha$  Lyrae,  $\gamma$  Cassiopeiæ,  $\eta$  Ursæ Majoris); but the spectra are cut off near 3000 Å. in all cases. This result appears to vitiate the hope of penetrating beyond the 3000 Å. barrier, at the same time as it may lend enhanced interest to the problem of atmospheric ozone. The equipment was insufficient to determine the height and thickness of the ozone layer, and it may be that Cario's idea is right in so far that ozone is no longer situated at the height of 50 km. found in lower latitudes. In this connexion it may be remarked that Honningsvåg is situated in the auroral belt, and from the auroral spectrum we infer that in this region free oxygen atoms will be present at a height of 100 km. and upwards. It is natural to infer that where monatomic and diatomic oxygen exist there will also

be formed ozone, and that during the arctic night the ozone layer rises to greater heights than usual. It is hoped to look further into this problem on a later occasion.

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#### Zoological Nomenclature.

IN accordance with the provisions governing possible suspension of the rules, the undersigned has the honour to invite the attention of the zoological profession to the fact that application for suspension of the rules has been made in the case of *Nycteribia Latreille, 1796*, monotype *Pediculus vespertilionis* Linn., 1758. The Commission is requested to set aside the monotype designated in 1796 and to validate *Nycteribia pedicularia* 1805 as type of *Nycteribia*. *Pediculus vespertilionis* Linn. was based on an acarine (described and figured by Frisch, 1728) which is now classified in *Spinturnix*. Latreille was dealing with an insect which he erroneously determined as *Pediculus vespertilionis*. Unless the rules are suspended, *Nycteribia* should be transferred from the Diptera to the Acarina and should supplant *Spinturnix*; this would cause extreme confusion and upset generic and supergeneric nomenclature which has been accepted without challenge for about a century.

A vote on the foregoing proposition will be delayed until about Jan. 1, 1930, in order to give zoologists interested in the case ample opportunity to express their opinions, *pro* or *con*, to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

C. W. STILES

(Secretary of Commission).

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#### Science and Life.

THE attitude taken by Mr. Aldous Huxley, as described by Major Church in *NATURE* of Jan. 5, p. 6, does not strike me as altogether novel. Was it not given—and I think with implicit condemnation—by Matthew Arnold in four unsurpassable lines of "The New Syrens":

"Hath your wisdom felt emotions?  
Will it weep our burning tears?  
Hath it drunk of our love-potions,  
Crowning moments with the wealth of years?"

Arnold's 'wisdom' did not connote science: but psychologically the parallel is close. It is one of time's and heredity's ironies that Mr. Huxley is grandson of one of that band of scientific friends who, with their wives, sometimes resorted to the woods and read poetry aloud; and, if memory do not play me false, the great Huxley on one such occasion read "Denone." Those great scientists' wisdoms could and did feel emotions at any rate.

FRANK H. PERRY-COSTE.

Polperro, Cornwall, Jan. 13.

#### The Green Ray.

AS seen from my house at St. Leonards, the sun sets at sea up to about this date, and behind the South Downs from now onwards. Only in the latter case have I been able occasionally to observe the greenishness of the last ray, and then indistinctly, owing no doubt to the habitual want of clearness of the atmosphere over the Downs at sunset. To-day the sun set behind the sloping face (as it appears from here) of Beachy Head. The ray was pure green.

T. S. DYMOND.

St. Leonards-on-Sea,  
Sussex, Jan. 19.