

pressa, described in Babington's 'Manual,' and could not speak with certainty about its claims to be held a distinct species; but the published characters by which it was attempted to be distinguished from the better known species were scarcely sufficient with these examples before the Society. When a series of specimens of *D. octopetala* are examined, it will be seen that the sepals are usually broader in those which are more advanced in the fruiting stage, as compared with others just opening into flower. Of the specimens before the Society, the one having the broadest sepals was advanced in fruit. But it was proper also to observe, that on this specimen a single sepal was longer than the rest, and had apparently been white and petal-like at its extremity; it might therefore be considered an aberration rather than a healthy variation from the normal form.

MISCELLANEOUS.

NOTES IN NATURAL HISTORY*.

"I HAVE been able to make scarcely any remark worthy of notice on subjects connected with natural history since I left England. One is of the growth of the "Chicorée †," as the shells I send you are called, at Séchelles: they are found in the grassy weed which grows on a somewhat muddy bottom, in which they bury themselves almost entirely during the period in which the shell is tender. I send you four, with the shells in progressive stages of development, which I collected and packed with great care, and hope you will receive them safe.

"In coming from Séchelles hither we touched at Juan de Nova, where I had an opportunity of seeing for the first time an island of purely coral formation. It is of a horse-shoe shape, about twenty-one miles long, and from half to three-quarters of a mile broad, with extensive reefs around it abounding with turtle. Dogs of different kinds have been left there from time to time, and finding abundance of food in the turtle-eggs, young turtle, and sea-fowl, have multiplied prodigiously, so that there are now some thousands of them. I can testify from personal observation that they drink salt water, and they have *entirely lost the faculty of barking*. Some of them which have been in captivity several months had not yet lost their wild looks and habits, nor had they any inclination for the company of other dogs, nor did they acquire their voice. You may perhaps have heard of this before; if so, my notice will confirm your knowledge; if not, I hope the facts, as being of my own ocular demonstration, will prove interesting. On the island the dogs congregate in vast packs, and catch sea-birds with as much address as foxes could display. They dig up the turtle-eggs and frequently quarrel over their booty. The greater part of them droop their tails like

* Extract from a letter dated Port Louis, Mauritius, Oct. 2nd, 1844, from G. Clarke, Esq. to Thomas Bell, Esq.

† *Murex saxatilis*.

wolves, but many carry them curled over their backs. They appear to consist of spaniel, terrier, Newfoundland and hound, in various degrees of mixture, and are of all colours except pure white or brindled.

“A most tremendous epizootic has visited us, as you have perhaps seen by the papers. From 10,000 to 12,000 head of bullocks have fallen victims to it, and not three per cent. of those attacked have escaped, nor have any preventive or curative measures whatever been found. It seems to be a kind of catarrhal fever, and is generally fatal in three or four days. Its ravages were fearfully rapid, herds of 200 or 300 being entirely finished in a single week. This calamity is the more sorely felt from its occurring just at the beginning of crop, which is remarkably heavy this year.”

EHRENBERG'S RESEARCHES ON INFUSORIA.

M. von Humboldt, in a letter to M. Valenciennes (Potsdam, December 16), gives an account of M. Ehrenberg's observations on the Infusoria contained in the sea-water brought by Captain Ross from various latitudes, and in the atmospheric dust sent to him by Mr. Darwin (Annals, vol. xiv. p. 169). He adds, “M. Ehrenberg has also found that the calcareous Bryozoa, of which $\frac{2}{3}$ ths of the chalk is composed, descend below the Jura formation, in the United States as far as the mountain limestone; but the species which occur in these formations are different from those of the chalk. You also know that notwithstanding the age of the chalk, half of the calcareous Bryozoa of this formation still live in the Baltic or in the ocean.

“The pumice-stone contained in the *trass* of the Rhine (of volcanic origin) is filled with siliceous Infusoria. It is to be supposed that the little animals inhabited the pumice-stone fallen into some fresh-water lake, and that these fragments were afterwards enveloped in a muddy ejection. As pumice-stone is formed from obsidian, and as volcanoes are a reaction of that which is in the innermost part of our planet against its outer crust, we cannot admit the pre-existence of the siliceous Polygastrica in craters. We must begin by collecting facts, hypotheses will come afterwards.”—*Comptes Rendus*, Dec. 23, 1844.

Occurrence of the Anoplotherium in the lowest layers of the tertiary period of the Paris Basin. By M. E. ROBERT.

Amongst the numerous bones of the Lophiodon, crocodile, tortoise, &c. associated with the stems of *Yuccaceæ*, which I have collected at different intervals in the central and upper layers of the *calcaire grossier* of Nanterre and of Passy, I have hitherto only been able to separate a jaw-bone of *Anoplotherium leporinum*; the rarity of such a fossil might lead us to suppose that the Lophiodons are almost the only ones which are to be met with much lower than their congeners, the Anoplotheriums and Palæotheriums, in the tertiary layers; however, beneath the *calcaire grossier* and in the midst of the plastic