

We regret to learn from the *American Naturalist* of the death of Mr. Charles F. Patterson, Superintendent of the U.S. Coast Survey. It is supposed that Mr. John E. Hilgard, for a long time second officer of the Survey, will be promoted to the vacant post.

Mr. BRANTON, F.G.S., is, we are informed, leaving the Geological Survey to be Assistant-Keeper of the Geological Department at the British Museum of Natural History, South Kensington.

THE meeting of the Iron and Steel Institute being held in Leeds in this week is probably the most interesting and important ever the Institute was founded. Representatives of nearly every foreign Government are present, and the number of foreign members is unusually large. Several of the papers are of great practical and even scientific interest, and are sure to attract much attention and give rise to discussion. On Tuesday visits were paid to Messrs. Siemens' works at Woodlith, and to the Victoria Works, and in the evening the Lord Mayor entertained the Institute at dinner. Yesterday afternoon a visit was made to Woodlith Arsenal, and in the evening the annual dinner of the Institute was held at Willis's Rooms. Today the Small-Arms Factory at Enfield is to be visited, and the Carriage Works of the Great Eastern Railway at Stratford, and in the evening a concert will be held at St. Mark's Kensington Museum. To-morrow will be devoted to a visit to Newbarn and Brighton.

THE following lectures this winter at the London Institution, Finsbury Circus, will be Mr. Grant Allen ("An English Wood"); Prof. H. E. Armstrong, F.R.S. ("The Economical Use of Coal-gas for Lighting and Heating"); Prof. W. E. Ayrton, F.R.S. ("The Storage of Power"); Prof. J. E. Ball, F.R.S. ("Comets"); Dr. David S. Dudge, F.R.S. ("A Living Paradox"); Prof. R. Bradley ("Materials used for Paper"); Dr. James Graham, F.R.S. ("The Auriferous Ocher-springs of Europe"); Prof. J. W. Judd, F.R.S. ("Are there Coal-fields under London?"); Prof. E. Ray Lankester, F.R.S. ("Scorpions, Terrestrial and Marine"); Prof. G. J. Lodge ("Electricity versus Smoke"); Mr. John Perry ("Spinning tops"); Dr. W. H. Stone ("Singing, Speaking, and Stammering"); Mr. James Sully ("The Grammar and Phrasology of Dreams"); and the Rev. J. C. Wood ("The Heretic's Hood").

A LETTER was read at the recent Social Science meeting at Finsbury from Mr. Charles Darwin to Mrs. Emily Taylor, in regard to her inquiries as to the hereditary and the mental and bodily development of Indians. He specifies points of inquiry which it seems to him possess some scientific interest. "Even the education of the parents, for instance, influence the mental powers of their children at any age, either at a very early or somewhat more advanced stage? This could perhaps be learned by education or otherwise, if a large number of children were first chosen according to age and their mental statements, and afterwards in connection with the education of their parents, so far as this could be discovered. An observation is one of the earliest faculties developed in young children, and so this power would probably be retained in an equal degree by the children of educated and uneducated parents, it seems not impossible that any transmitted effect from education would be displayed only at a somewhat advanced age. It would be desirable to test statistically, in a similar manner, the truth of the above-mentioned statement that cultured children at first learn as quickly as white children, but that they afterwards fall off in progress. If it could be proved that education acts not only on the individual, but by transmission on the race, this would be a great encouragement to all working on this all-important subject. It is well known that children sometimes exhibit at a very early age strong special tastes, for which no cause can be

assigned, although occasionally they may be accounted for by reversion to the taste or occupation of some progenitor; and it would be interesting to learn how far such early tastes are persistent and influence the future career of the individual. In some instances such tastes die away without apparently leaving any after effect; but it would be desirable to know how far this is commonly the case, so we should then know whether it were important to direct, so far as this is possible, the early tastes of our children. It may be more beneficial that a child should follow energetically some pursuit, of however trifling a nature, and thus acquire perseverance, than that he should be tossed from it, because of a future aversion to him. I will mention one other small point of inquiry in relation to very young children, which may possibly prove important with respect to the origin of language, but it could be investigated only by persons possessing an accurate mental ear: children, even before they can articulate, express some of their feelings and desires by voices uttered in different notes. For instance, they make an interrogative noise, and others of ascent and descent in different tones, and I would, I think, be worth while to ascertain whether there is any uniformity in different children in the pitch of their voices under various frames of mind."

IN a letter to the *Medical Staff* of September 8 on the use of gipsies as used as a protective agent for disease, Capt. J. B. Taylor, the Major-Superintendent of Madras, gives the following interesting "an-ecdoté story":—"A scoldish Indian connected with this sea-weed, is recalled to recollection, by Mr. Parnell's letter. About fifteen years ago, while I was in my ship at anchor in Table Bay, an enormous monster, as it appeared, was seen drifting, or advancing itself toward Green Point, into the Harbour. It was more than one hundred feet in length, and moved with an undulating snake-like motion. Its head was crowned with what appeared to be long hair, and the beam-light among the affrighted observers disclosed that could see its eyes and cartilaginous features. The military were called out, and a brisk fire poured into it at a distance of about five hundred yards. It was hit several times, and portions of it floated off. The animal was in evident agony, that on its reaching the point it became quite still, and boats went off to examine it and complete its destruction. It was found to be a specimen of the sea-weed above mentioned, and its outline after the gaseous injuries inflicted was due to its having hit the ground and entered the quiet waters of the Bay."

Dr. R. W. BRANTON is about to publish the series of lectures delivered by him in the spring at the instance of the "Ladies' Sanitary Association," of Finsbury Street. The lectures are devoted generally to the subject of "Domestic Sanitation," in the interesting series, which will be commenced in the Lower Hall, Kewee Hall, on Saturday, the 22nd inst, the structure and functions of the nervous system, and the physical and mental training of the young, will occupy a prominent place.

THE *Phylloxera Congress*, to which we have already referred, was opened on Sunday at Bordeaux.

THE Rev. J. Haldane-Nichol writes to the *Times* from Coude, near Woodstock, Dublin:—"On October 1, about eight p.m., when I was walking in a north-westerly direction, about three hundred yards north-west of Haulbowree Station, which is three-quarters of a mile north-west of Galah, the country was suddenly flooded with a light that shed with that of the moon, which shone more than half full in the west. Thinking much, I beheld a magnificent meteor, of a pale yellow hue, descending with a slow motion, vertically. It seemed larger than Jupiter. When I first saw it, it had dropped about a third of the distance from the zenith to the horizon; after traversing by another third of that space it burst without uttering any sparks."