

fiercely attacked a couple of newts, and drove them away from a certain place in a small pond. We searched for the brave little fellow's nest, but could not find it. We should be glad to know if any one else has observed the like.

BUTTERCUP MONSTROSITY.—Recently I saw a very curious freak of nature in a buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*). A double flower had grown on a stalk formed by the cohesion of five or six ordinary flower stalks, so that the flower seemed to grow from the top of a vegetable ribbon of about an inch wide.—*John F. Carne.*

YEW POISONING.—The thanks of all your readers are, I am sure, due to Mr. Modlen for his clear and admirable paper on "The Poisonous Properties of the Yew." The facts cannot be too widely known. Perhaps you will allow me to give my experience as to the effect of yew poisoning on poultry. Last winter a large limb of a yew in the churchyard here was broken off by the weight of the snow. The limb was cut up on the spot, and placed, foliage and all, in the poultry-yard. The fowls immediately began to peck it. Its first effect was to "scour" them considerably—the foliage passing through the alimentary canal without much alteration in colour. They began to mope and lose their feathers, and present altogether a most melancholy appearance; but none of them died. Of course the yew was removed when it was found the fowls were eating it, but they probably had access to it for some days. I do not think the poison interfered with their laying, or with the wholesomeness of the eggs. With regard to the berries, I often used to eat them when a child, but I never crumbled or swallowed the stones, as I was always told that they were poisonous, though the pulp was harmless. There is a female yew on the lawn here which is visited every autumn by hawfinches, which eat the berries, and crack the stones, I suppose for the sake of the kernels. This, and what Mr. Lett tells us in your last issue of mice eating the berries of *Solanum dulcamara*, reminds me of another fact which bears out the truth of the familiar adage, "One man's meat is another man's poison." The late Mr. Darwin once showed me some beans of strychnos which had been eaten through and through, apparently by the larva of some fly or moth. They had been sent him (he said) by a correspondent to show that some living thing could be nourished on what is to most animals a deadly poison. By-the-bye, may I ask Mr. Lett whether the poisonous property of the berries of *Solanum dulcamara* is really proved? I see C. A. Johns only speaks of them as "narcotic."—*R. S. Patrick, Sellinge Vicarage, Kent.*

OLD ENGLISH PLANT-NAMES.—It seems strange that "cheese-rennet" should be the old English plant-name for crosswort. I cannot discover that this plant (*Galium cruciatum*) has ever been used in the way which the ancient name indicates. "The generic name is derived from γαλα, milk, one of the species having been employed to curdle milk" (see Barton and Castle's "Flora Medica," 1877). The species referred to is evidently yellow bed-straw (*G. verum*). Sowerby, after describing the yellow bed-straw, adds: "The power of this herb to coagulate milk is well known, and Gerarde tells us the best Cheshire cheese in his time was made with it." It is easy to understand that "cheese-rennet" should be the old English name of a plant possessing the properties of the yellow bed-straw, but I fail to see the reason for calling crosswort by such a name. Perhaps Mr. Roberts will favour us with some further information as to this.—*A. G. Wheatcroft.*

BELLIS PERENNIS.—I yesterday walked over the bare and thinly-turfed ridge of the chalk downs for some miles, beneath a tropical temperature, in the direction of Dorking. As far as I proceeded, I saw nothing but diminutive daisies, with blossoms not exceeding the third or fourth of an inch. I noticed on the occasion of one of my previous walks that the dandelions were all dwarfed, and presented an equally remarkable appearance; but I afterwards learnt that they were in the habit of putting forth larger leaves and blossoms later on in the year; and this, I conclude, may also be the case with the daisies and other plants growing upon the scanty soil and among the thickly-crowded vegetation that covers the ridge of the downs, where the struggle for existence is very perceptible.—*A. H. Swinton, Guildford, July 8th.*

DELHI ELASTIC STONE.—Can any of your readers inform me what is the history and nature of the so-called "Delhi elastic stone," of which specimens reach the country from time to time as curiosities? The only one which I have seen—brought from Delhi by an officer—measures about nine and a-half inches by two and a-half in width, and half an inch in thickness; it has the outward appearance of a piece of coarse sandstone, of a cream or pale fawn colour, and the angles are all rounded off, though the surface shows no marks of friction. It will bend to a very appreciable extent in any direction, and under careful extension will yield in the direction of its length slightly. Its symmetrical appearance and rounded angles, with the absence of tool-marks, negative the idea of its having been fashioned out of a block, while its flexibility (for it is flexible rather than elastic) suggests a composite character—some organic matter, covered or incorporated with the inorganic; but I am assured that the fracture is homogeneous in appearance.—*C. E. Paterson.*

FROGS AND THEIR ENEMIES.—Your correspondent, Mr. W. M. Williams, says: "Few animals have more enemies than the frog." True; I once had a cat which was very fond of biting off and devouring the hind-legs of frogs. One day I caught her in the fact, and the screams of poor froggy were heartrending to hear; and yet in spite of this you will constantly hear persons say "frogs have no feelings." I saw several frogs minus their hind-legs before the above occurred, and could not for the life of me discover the cause. The wounds had healed most perfectly, but of course all leaping power of the frog was destroyed.—*Mark Antony.*

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TO CORRESPONDENTS AND EXCHANGERS.—As we now publish SCIENCE-GOSSIP earlier than formerly, we cannot undertake to insert in the following number any communications which reach us later than the 8th of the previous month.

TO ANONYMOUS QUERISTS.—We must adhere to our rule of not noticing queries which do not bear the writers' names.

TO DEALERS AND OTHERS.—We are always glad to treat dealers in natural history objects on the same fair and general ground as amateurs, in so far as the "exchanges" offered are fair exchanges. But it is evident that, when their offers are simply disguised advertisements, for the purpose of evading the cost of advertising, an advantage is taken of our gratuitous insertion of "exchanges" which cannot be tolerated.

WE request that all exchanges may be signed with name (or initials) and full address at the end.

A. E. HALL.—The "Butterfly" only commenced this year, in monthly numbers, twopence each. The editor is Mr. Skuse, 9 Wellington Road, Bow Road, London.