them." (*Ibid.* p. 541.) Mr. Murphy's assertion that his view of the case is "certainly supported by the very general fact of the males fighting for the possession of the females," makes against his argument if we consider another "very general fact," viz., that there is a sort of inverse proportion between pugnacity and coloration. For an answer to the next paragraph, compare "Descent of Man," pp. 225 and 226.

I do not know that I can quite agree even with your correspondent's closing paragraph. If we can imagine such a state of things as a colony of women left entirely to themselves, I think it is at least open to question whether their "love of dress and ornament" would not begin to decline.

A DISCIPLE OF DARWIN

"Ring Blackbird"

THE bird about which your correspondent C. M. Ingleby inquires is figured in most works on Ornithology as the Ring Ousel—is a local, not uncommon, but generally exceedingly shy bird. Through the late severe weather, however, and for a few days after the thaw, a cock bird has been a daily and very interesting visitor on my lawn. They are generally found on commons and in the neighbourhood of retired copses, and are only driven by stress of weather so near houses.

Bregner, Bournemouth, Jan. 9

HERVEY CECIL

[Another correspondent, F. B. Doveton, writes to the same effect, but states his belief that the Ring Ousel is only a summer visitant with us, its winter habitat being Southern Europe and Africa.—ED.]

THE NEW WESTERN CHINA EXPEDITION

WE are glad to learn that the Western China Expedition which left Rangoon in the middle of last month to reopen the old trade-route between Upper Burma and Yunan, as we intimated a fortnight ago, has an efficient scientific staff attached to it. Col. Horace Browne is the commander of the expedition, and Mr. Ney Elias, Gold Medallist of the Royal Geographical Society and Assistant Political Resident at the Court of Mandalay, is the topographer. Dr. John Anderson, Director of the Imperial Museum at Calcutta, who was recalled from leave in England for the purpose, has been appointed medical officer and naturalist, and takes with him four collectors—two zoological and two botanical.

The expedition was provided at Calcutta with an efficient guard of fifteen Sikh soldiers, picked men from the fort, and two native doctors. At Rangoon they were to be joined by an Attaché of the British Embassy at Peking, and a Chinese interpreter. Another of the Peking Attachés, with an interpreter and guard, is to be despatched from Shanghai into the interior of China to meet them. These Attachés will be of the greatest use in keeping the expedition right as regards their intercourse with the Chinese officials. Dr. Anderson takes with him a fine photographic apparatus, which he will use himself. A considerable sum has been laid out in presents for the chiefs and other personages expected to be met with during the route: for the Viceroy of Yunan, two fine horses and a pair of kangaroo-hounds have been selected, and a large number of other appropriate objects.

The expedition is expected to be able to make its way from the upper waters of the Irawaddy to those of the Yangtse-Kiang in the course of a few months, and will descend the latter river to the sea-coast of China. The Chinese Government has given every facility in the way of passports, so that there is every prospect of a successful result.

THE ACCLIMATISATION OF SALMON IN OTAGO

A RENEWED attempt is now being made to acclimatise the British salmon (*Salmo salar*) in New Zealand. The preliminary stages of the necessary operations have been carried out in Scotland, under the per-

sonal direction of Mr. Buckland, one of her Majesty's inspectors of salmon fisheries, and the ship, the *Timaru*, containing the precious freight, has sailed from the River Clyde, and is now, it is to be hoped, a far way on her voyage.

What has been done is as follows:—A quarter of a million of eggs have been taken from large, living salmon captured expressly for the purpose. These ova have been treated on what may be called the "piscicultural plan," that is, the eggs have been forcibly extruded from the fish in a vessel filled with water, by means of gentle pressure applied to the abdomen, from which they fall quite easily; after the ova are washed they are carefully impregnated with the milt of the male fish, and are then ready to be laid down on the hatching boxes. On the present occasion the eggs were brought from Perthshire, where they were obtained, chiefly from tributaries of the rivers Forth and Tay, to Glasgow, in order to undergo the process of packing for their long voyage. It is gratifying to know that only a very small portion of the eggs were spoiled while undergoing the process of being fecundated.

The plan adopted on the present occasion was to pack the ova on trays of perforated zinc, on which had been placed a thin layer of well-washed moss. The trays containing the precious ova were then arranged in a series of boxes, each of them a foot cube; these boxes will be carried to their destination in a cabin expressly built for them, paved with ice to the depth of about two feet, and having walls of ice three feet in thickness. A stratum of the same material is inserted between each box, so that the eggs during the passage of the *Timaru*, which may take a hundred days, will be kept at a very low temperature. Great pains have been taken in the packing of the eggs, and also as regards the disposition of the boxes in the ice-house, which will be hermetically sealed, and not be broken open till the ship is in port. It is an important circumstance in favour of this experiment that the eggs selected were all taken from fish which, judging by their dimensions, would be of considerable weight; not a few of them must have weighed over twenty-five pounds. They were not in the least injured during the process of compulsory deprivation of their eggs and milt, but when restored to the water went off quite lively, and as if they had enjoyed the process of artificial spawning.

The ship is expected to reach her destination, Bluff Harbour, New Zealand, about the end of March, at which date all the salmon eggs which she carries would, in the natural state, have become living fish, and, indeed, be a week or two old. The *Timaru*, as the time approaches for her arrival in New Zealand, will be anxiously watched for, and it is to be hoped that all the future stages of this important experiment will be as carefully gone about and as successfully accomplished as the initiatory operations.

The development of the ova whilst the ship is on her voyage will be largely prevented by the very low temperature which must result from the enormous quantity of ice that is in use. How far the rivers of New Zealand, seeing that upon the arrival of the eggs they will be at an autumnal temperature, may be suited for the ripening of the fish, has yet to be determined. We sincerely hope all the conditions will be favourable to the hatching and growth of the salmon. It will prove a singularly interesting task to trace the history of *Salmo salar*, so to say, from its creation, and to watch its progress from one stage of its life to another. We anticipate in the process the correction of many errors which have crept into the details of its natural history, so far as we know it at present.

The physical conditions of New Zealand have been depicted as being very similar to those of the old country; the resemblance will appear still more striking to emigrants when they see the finest fish of the old country leaping in its rivers.