

trees now under cultivation are monœcious, the tree perhaps adapting itself to the enforced solitude of its new abode in gardens. However, it appears at present to be both monœcious and diœcious, like several other Coniferæ.

In the grounds at Beaufort Castle, near Inverness, are several specimens of this Araucaria, producing only male or pollen-bearing catkins. One, a particularly fine tree, has borne such pendent cones for several years past. Last week I had the opportunity of inspecting a rather famous Araucaria at Conan, the seat of Sir Kenneth Mackenzie. This is said to be one of the first three specimens introduced into Scotland; the other two at Edinburgh were, I believe, killed by the severe winter of 1860. The tree at Conan has lost all its lower branches, and has grown but little of late years; it, however, yearly produces the erect ovule-bearing cones, and about twelve years ago, these contained fertile seed. Specimens grown from the seed of that year are still thriving at Gairloch, on the north-west coast of Scotland. No fertile seeds have been produced since; and as there was no other specimen certainly within several miles that could have produced the necessary pollen, we must conclude in the absence of direct evidence that this is a diœcious tree, and produced the more insignificant male catkins on the one occasion only. I therefore need hardly point out that unless the Araucaria at Inveraray is also provided with male flowers, or some other specimen similarly provided grows in the neighbourhood, the Duke of Argyll may assuredly expect his lawn to be strewn next year with only empty seed-vessels.

In answer to Mr. Gardiner, I may remark that I could detect no difference in habit or foliage between the diœcious male tree at Beaufort and the monœcious one at Conan; the latter, however, is so much damaged as to render comparison difficult.

ADRIAN WELD-BLUNDELL.

The Abbey, Fort Augustus, November 30.

YOUR correspondent, Mr. A. D. Webster, in your issue of November 20 (p. 57), states that the male catkins of the above tree are extremely rare as compared with the fruiting cones. If this is the case, though my own observations would have led me to the contrary opinion—the following instances may be of interest. I have observed the male catkins on a tree in the cemetery of this town for two or three successive years, in considerable quantities. In the grounds at The Elms, Houghton, Hunts., there is a tree which for several years past has borne large quantities of the male “amenta,” giving to it, as your correspondent describes, a very striking appearance. Another tree in the same grounds has this year produced a single specimen of the same nature, while a third, of the opposite sex, is also developing a fruiting cone, which will doubtless, in the near proximity of the pollen-bearing ones, perfect its seeds.

Among specimens of the male catkins that I possess from the latter place is one which is “double,” the floral axis being bifid. It has occurred to me that this may be some slight indication as to the much-vexed question of the morphology of the “amenta,” whether each consists of a series of *monandrous* flowers or constitutes a single *polyandrous* one; the above monstrosity seeming to point towards the former, as the bifurcation of the axis of an *inflorescence* is a common phenomenon, that of a single *flower* being, on the contrary, much rarer.

I am not sure whether I should be right in generalizing from the comparatively few fruiting examples I have seen, but in the cases which have come under my observation the female trees have been more distantly branched than the male, where the ramification is considerably closer and more luxuriant.

Northampton, December 3.

H. N. DIXON.

#### Dry-rot Fungus.

THE “beautiful growth of fungus covering the wall and floor (in a wine-cellar) to a depth of 4 inches, suggesting cotton-wool in form and colour,” referred to by “M. H. M.,” is the destructive dry-rot (*Merulius lacrymans*), and I would advise your correspondent to make war upon it without delay. The cotton-wool form is an early stage of the fungus. If neglected, it will in a few months develop a leathery sheet, sending out tough leathery cords a quarter of an inch thick, with spore-bearing folds of a rusty colour. These spores will scatter themselves all over the cellar, and will be difficult to eradicate. The mycelium of the fungus buries itself in any kind of wood, especially deal, runs rapidly down the

longitudinal fibres, and, as it goes, destroys the “nature” of the wood, so that it snaps and crumbles under the slightest pressure. I have had to deal with this pest in a range of cellars with a timber roof, and have found the best remedy to be repeated applications of corrosive sublimate dissolved in methylated spirit freely painted on the timber, walls, or floor, wherever the “cotton-wool” makes its appearance. I had to cut away 8 feet in length of a 10-inch Memel beam which was permeated by the mycelium, and rotten to the core. Between the end of this beam and the back of the recess in the brick wall in which it rested was a vacant space filled with the mature fungus full of spores. This was two years ago. I have been fighting the fungus ever since with the corrosive sublimate, and have nearly exterminated it. The first appearance of the cotton-wool should be attacked without delay.

F. T. MOTT.

Birstal Hill, Leicester.

#### The Effect of Fog on Plants.

As my name appears somewhat prominently in your note on the important inquiry into the effect of fog on plants, may I explain that the experimental investigation of the subject from a botanical point of view is entirely in the able hands of my friend, Dr. Oliver?

I am prepared, as stated in the Scientific Committee's circular, to examine any specimens of plants affected by fog which may be sent to me, but my share in the work does not go beyond this.

The inquiry is of very great interest, both to horticulturalists and botanists, and I am glad that it has been noticed in the columns of NATURE.

D. H. SCOTT.

Royal College of Science, South Kensington,  
London, S.W., December 6.

#### Great Waterfalls.

WOULD you allow me to supplement my inquiries published in last week's NATURE (p. 105) by asking for a description of the Pambam-arivy Falls in India, of which I have only the following brief note:—“In the Travancore Hills between Tinevely and Travancore is situate the magnificent Pambam-arivy, or Snake Fall. It is a double fall, descending in the first plunge from the cliff edge 1200 feet, and it can be seen from a distance of forty miles.”

ARTHUR G. GUILLEMARD.

Eltham, Kent, December 9.

#### A Band of Light.

THE account of the so-called comet that was seen by Mr. Eddie at Grahamstown (see NATURE, November 27, p. 89) reminds me of the phenomenon seen some years ago in this country during an auroral display. A band of light, in shape somewhat resembling a comet, was seen to move across the sky, rising in the north-east and disappearing in the north-west; it moved, however, much faster than the comet-like body lately observed, being in sight, as far as I remember, only one or two minutes.

C. C.

Trinity College, Cambridge.

#### Some Habits of the Spider.

IN default of any other it may be worth while to call to mind the following record of the habit of certain spiders, alluded to by “A. S. E.”:—“He saw great spiders with crowns and crosses, marked on their backs, who sat in the middle of their webs, and when they saw Tom coming, shook them so fast that they became invisible” (Kingsley, “Water Babies,” p. 40).

W. E. H.

#### BOTANICAL ENTERPRISE IN THE WEST INDIES.

DURING the last twelve years considerable effort has been made to enlarge the sphere of action of the botanical organizations in the West Indies. At the beginning of the period there were only two botanical establishments in this part of the world, one at Jamaica and the other at Trinidad. Since that time an important botanical garden has been successfully