

hint of his well-known "cup" anemometer, although Edgeworth only speaks of *bending* the various pieces of metal which formed the terminations of the arms of the revolving apparatus with which he was experimenting. This paper was alluded to by the president, in the course of his address to the Meteorological Society, but in such a manner as to lead me to suppose that it was not very generally known.

May I ask when, and by whom the word "anemometer" was introduced? The earliest instance of the use of the word, with which I am acquainted, is by D'Ons en Bray, in 1734. I expect that it is of French origin. RICHARD B. PROSSER

### Vivisection

It is due to Prof. Yeo to state that while enumerating in his article on Vivisection the texts which in his opinion bore most directly upon the subject, he did not omit the case of the swine to which Mr. Stevenson alludes (*NATURE*, vol. xxv. p. 483). I may, observe, however, that as Prof. Yeo's argument only required to cite the texts which convey the authority of our Lord, he did not make out so strong a justification of physiological method on biblical grounds as he might otherwise have done. The whole philosophy of "scape-goats" and of animal sacrifice in general, clearly rested on the assumption that the Deity considered vicarious suffering of animals for the benefit of man, not merely to be what Lord Coleridge would term "lawful," but even desirable to the extent of rendering it obligatory on man to "shed the blood" of lower creatures for the purpose of obtaining immunity from evil.

This is not the place to consider such a topic at length, but after what has already appeared in these columns it seems worth while to observe that anti-vivisectionists would show themselves most politic by not attempting to carry their controversy into the domain of biblical ethics. The uniform opinion entertained by the canonical writers touching the importance and the rights of animals in the divine scheme of things, appears to have been that which is so tersely expressed by the Jewish Apostle of the Gentiles—"Doth God take care for oxen?"

THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLE ON "VIVISECTION"

It is with great regret that I inform you, and through you Miss Cobbe and the readers of *NATURE* in general, that I have been made the victim of a *ridiculous and ill-timed hoax*. The little anecdote of Miss Cobbe which appeared in *NATURE*, vol. xxv. p. 459, is, it appears on investigation, quite apocryphal; yet my informant, when relating it to me, asseverated its truth so strongly, and gave me so many corroborating details, that I did not hesitate in saying that "I knew it to be true." He even ventured to "name" the celebrated vivisectionist whom Miss Cobbe was supposed to have interviewed. Therefore, when doubts began to be cast on the accuracy of my statements, I communicated with this gentleman, who informed me that the whole of this conversation between himself and Miss Cobbe is *totaly imaginary* and never took place. "A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind," and I am sure Miss Cobbe, having been so often victimised herself, and led to believe ridiculous tales of hideous and impossible torture inflicted by high-minded, scientific gentlemen, will sympathise with me in my chagrin at finding myself a victim to my own gullibility.

May I be allowed to add, Sir, a serious postscript to my letter?

We none of us—I least of all—doubt the value of Miss Cobbe's advocacy of any cause. Had not the practice of vivisection been based on an earnest seeking after knowledge, it had surely fallen ere this before Miss Cobbe's stout blows. Now whilst we are disputing as to whether the practice of vivisection be right or wrong, a far more serious question—I had well-nigh said "crime"—is confronting us. Owing to the extraordinary demand for rare (not necessarily "beautiful") birds' skins, for the adornment of women, we are threatened with the rapid, almost immediate, extinction of some of the most wonderful species of the world's avifauna. I saw, in a milliner's shop in Regent Street, the other day, four birds of paradise, two trogons, scarlet ibises by the dozen, a rare goatsucker, kingfishers, orioles, and bee-eaters, not to mention many other birds whose greater abundance might seem to excuse their wholesale sacrifice. Now, Sir, the human race has already had to mourn the destruction of the dodo, the solitary, the great auk, and the moa: let us not add to this list the *paradisæida*, the trogons, and the humming-birds. If then, Miss Cobbe will only place

herself at the head of an Anti-bird-skin-wearing Association, she will find one of the most grateful and humble of her followers in your obedient servant, H. H. JOHNSTON

PS.—I take this opportunity of remarking, that I have no connection whatever, in an official capacity, with the Zoological Gardens. I headed my first letter thus, merely because it accidentally happened that I borrowed pen, ink, and paper, and wrote it there.

Tudor House, Champion Hill, S.E., March 27

YOUR correspondent, Mr. C. A. Stevenson, referring to the miraculous narrative of St. Mark, chap. v., verses 26-32, reasons to the effect that if 2000 swine were destroyed to alleviate the sufferings of a single man, then are those physiologists to be justified who, for the benefit of the whole human race, sacrifice a few animals. But, unfortunately for the argument, neither from the narrative of St. Mark, nor from those in the other gospels, does it appear that the permission given to the "unclean spirits" to pass into the swine, after their expulsion from the "demoniac," in any way contributed to his cure. On the contrary, it is distinctly implied that the demons might have been sent elsewhere than into the swine. For, according to St. Mark, they "besought" that they might not be sent "away out of the country"; or, as St. Luke has it, that they might not be commanded "to go out into the deep," that is into the "abyss," elsewhere translated "bottomless pit." Thus, it seems to be taught that when driven out of the man, the demons might have become simply disembodied spirits; and, indeed, so far as we can gather, the permission to enter into the swine was purely *ex gratia*.

Hence any pro-vivisection argument to be sought in the fate of the swine must, I fear, assume a form differing somewhat from Mr. Stevenson's; but which I prefer not to specify.

W. S.

AS no one has made any remarks upon the passage in Mr. H. H. Johnston's letter, in which "a distinguished man of science" is said to have twitted a lady with "wearing ostrich feathers which are plucked from the *living bird*, causing most exquisite pain," will you allow me to inform the fair portion of your readers that they may wear ostrich feathers with clear consciences if they can make sure of these having been taken from living birds, *i.e.* from those kept on ostrich farms. It used, I believe, to be the practice to pluck out the feathers; but the inflammation set up proved injurious or fatal, as must be obvious, and the life of a bird worth perhaps 60*l.* or 80*l.* was endangered for a crop of feathers worth 7*l.* or 8*l.* When the feather is quite ripe and at its best, the quill is cut with a pair of scissors or sharp knife about half an inch from the skin, and the stump moults out in the ordinary course. Probably by far the larger quantity of plumes come from tame birds. In 1878, 57,144 lbs. were exported from the Cape, and there are probably considerably more than half a million of tame birds in South Africa at this moment.

Ladies who carry their anti-vivisection consistency so far as to have serious misgivings about wearing leather boots, must still be cautious in the matter of ostrich feathers; since numbers of birds are hunted down for their plumes, although we can hardly suppose them in this case even to be plucked out while the ostrich is alive. They would come quite as easily from a dead but still warm bird, and the hunter would not be exposed to the risk of that tremendous kick an ostrich can give. I shall be glad to know on what authority birds of paradise are stated to be "skinned alive."

ARTHUR NICOLS

### Phænology—An Appeal

THE undersigned would urge all those who take an interest in the phænology of plants to make as many and as accurate observations as possible, and they recommend as specially suitable the following plants (the dates after the names give the mean for Gies-sen, calculated from many years). The observations should be made on plants standing free, plants on espaliers being excluded, and they should be made daily, accurate results being only obtained in this way.

#### A.—FIRST BUDS OPEN

1. <i>Ribes rubrum</i> (red currant) ... ..	April 14
2. <i>Prunus Avium</i> (wild cherry) ... ..	" 19
3. <i>Prunus spinosa</i> (sloe) ... ..	" 20