

front view was a long bell-pull, hanging nearly from the ceiling to the floor. A mouse (I fancied, larger than the other mice) deliberately climbed to the top, turned himself round, and for some minutes quietly surveyed the room; then deliberately descended; and, in two or three minutes, not a mouse was left in the room. I slept in the same room many weeks after this occurrence, but I never again perceived the sign of a mouse.

I imagine that the mice inhabiting the house had perceived that this room was now partially inhabited, and that they suspected that it would probably contain something interesting to them; that, acting under a general, or chief engineer, they directed the whole strength of their tribe to work an entrance into the room; that their chief engineer, as soon as an entrance was gained, proceeded to examine the contents of the captured fortress; and that, thoroughly disappointed, he gave the signal for retreat, which the whole body of mice instantly obeyed.

September 10

A. B. G.

### "Cholera and Copper"

WITH reference to the letter on the above subject in this week's NATURE, it is quite true that the last visitation of cholera was especially severe here, yet in no single instance was a worker in the copper works of the neighbourhood attacked. It is the common boast of the copper-men that, although they lost many members of their family, living in the same house, by the dread disease, yet neither in the last visitation nor the previous ones was there a copper-man, *i.e.* a man working at a furnace, attacked.

There is no doubt that these men take large quantities of copper sulphate into their systems, for not only do they breathe the fine dust of regulus always floating about, but they handle their food with unwashed hands, or, if washed, not washed clean, and that their hands are covered with soluble copper salts is evidenced by their action on the iron tools which they handle, these quickly receiving a deposit of metallic copper.

This seems to be pretty fair evidence that copper is a preventive for cholera.

I may point out that it is not copper or any of its compounds which injures the vegetation, but sulphur dioxide, the principal gas evolved in smelting copper ores, and which goes by the name of "copper smoke."

W. TERRILL

Pfynone Club, Swansea, September 8

### Antiquities saved by Protective Resemblance

A LARGE number of pillar stones marked with crosses, early Christian inscriptions and oghams, have been destroyed in Britain by farmers during the present century; a still greater number must have been destroyed before these objects began to attract special attention. A great number of the still remaining examples have been utilised as gate-posts and rubbing-stones for cattle, *i.e.* upright stones set up in fields by Welsh farmers for cattle to rub their itching skins against. This fortuitous resemblance of the slightly squared inscribed stones has protected them from destruction. A few of the flatter examples have been utilised as bridges over narrow streams. Nearly all the examples which have not resembled the above-mentioned objects have met with destruction. It is a sort of survival of the fittest.

In Wales there are many ruined churches and monastic establishments with interiors gutted. Most of the old stone altar-slabs have so closely resembled doorsteps, that they have been saved. It is no uncommon thing to see an altar-slab with its five little crosses utilised as a doorstep to a cottage near a deserted church.

The bowl of a font often bears a sufficiently strong resemblance to a pig-trough to insure its preservation, and if the font is not visible in a ruined church the strong probability is it will be found utilised as a pig-trough in some neighbouring farmyard. Fonts with shallow bowls are specially preserved.

Stone coffins sometimes owe their preservation to their resemblance to and suitability for horse-troughs.

In some instances old churches are now used as barns, and in others as residences for farmers or farmers' men; sometimes a wooden floor has been erected across an old church and the upper part used as a store for hay, and the altar end as a pantry. I have seen the recess of the piscina furnished with a wooden door and the interior used as a cool receptacle for butter and lard. A fortuitous resemblance has protected it.

I could write out a large number of examples of the above and other curious instances of "protective resemblance" in antiquities. Indeed the above facts are so well known to antiquaries that, unless very inconvenient, no "rubbing-stone" or stone gate post is left unexamined in a strange district. Doorsteps, flat stones across streams, and stone hog-troughs are always carefully scrutinised by experienced archaeologists.

WORTHINGTON G. SMITH

### Meteor

A METEOR of surpassing brilliancy made its appearance here at about 4.46 p.m. on July 12. Its form might be described as somewhat rocket-like. It was observed streaming slowly from the west in an easterly direction, at an apparent altitude of about 45 degrees. Some idea of the brilliancy of this phenomenon may be formed when it is mentioned that it was seen in broad daylight, the sun setting on that day at 4.35 p.m. I notice the meteor was observed over a wide extent of country on the Canterbury Plains; it was noticed from Christchurch, and also at Raigora, to the north.

THOMAS H. POTTS

Ohinitahi, New Zealand, July 14

### The Meteor of August 19

THE meteor described in your issue of August 23 (p. 389) was well seen here (lat. 1° west, long. 54° 15' north) and formed a splendid object. It bore a little east of south, and its apparent path was nearly horizontal from west to east, towards and at about the same declination as the full moon. It would be interesting if its height above the earth were approximately ascertained and stated from the various observations made.

The Grange, Nawton, Yorkshire

C. D.

### HERMANN MÜLLER

THE news of the death of Hermann Müller of Lippstadt will come with a sense of personal loss to many of our readers, who have looked with interest for his frequent contributions to the columns of NATURE on the branch of natural history which he has made specially his own—the mutual relations to one another of insects and flowers in promoting cross-fertilisation. Much as we owe on this subject to some of our own naturalists, especially Darwin and Lubbock, the chief authority in it is, and probably always will be, Hermann Müller. Any future inquirer will necessarily turn, for the main part of his information, to his two great works, "Die Befruchtung der Blumen durch Insekten," published in 1873, and "Alpenblumen, ihre Befruchtung durch Insekten," published in 1881. The mass of information contained in these volumes is simply marvellous. In the first place the author has worked out with the greatest care the structure of those classes of insects which play the greatest part in the fertilisation of flowers with regard to their capacity for collecting nectar or pollen, and for carrying pollen from flower to flower. A very large proportion, including all the commoner ones, of the species which make up the phanerogamic flora of Central Europe are then taken up *seriatim*, the structure of the male and female organs described, illustrated often with very careful drawings, and always with reference to any special contrivances connected with the mode in which insects obtain the honey; and then a list is given of all the insects which he has observed visiting the flower. No one who has worked in the same field will fail to recognise the unfailing trustworthiness and accuracy of his observations. The "Befruchtung der Blumen" has only during the present year been presented to English readers in Mr. D'Arcy Thompson's translation, with an appreciative preface by the late Mr. C. Darwin, a notice of which will shortly appear in our columns. But these two works by no means exhaust Prof. Müller's labours in his favourite subject, as his numerous contributions to our columns show. He was also a frequent contributor to the German periodical *Kosmos*, discussing, with great wealth of knowledge and acute reasoning, the