The use of slips in scientific correspondence.[1]

An account of the 'slip-system of notes' was published by me in the Proceedings of the Boston society of natural history in 1867 (May 15, p. 242), after using it for more than a year. A fuller description is given in Wilder and Gage's 'Anatomical technology' (pp. 45–52). On p. 46 it is said that "slip-notes are of the following kinds: museum catalogues, library catalogues, references, extracts, statements of observations (original or otherwise, with or without drawings)."

During last summer I began to use slips in another way, suggested, perhaps, by the fact that *postal-cards* referring to a single point were frequently filed away with the slip-notes on the same subject. In my scientific correspondence I enclose slips (postal-card size) relating each to a special point. If written closely or with the type-writer, there is usually ample space, not only for the original note, but for an answer to it, if in the shape of inquiry: if not, a second is attached.

As compared with a letter in the usual form, such 'correspondence-slips' present the following advantages: 1. Each point may be attended to by the sender or the receiver independently of others which may require more delay; 2. Without transcription, the slips may be filed with others on the same subject; 3. The same slip, with or without attachments, may be sent back and forth, or to other correspondents, for comment or inquiry; 4. The date of each writing may be affixed, when desirable, either by hand, or by the use of Perkins rubber stamps, or other mechanical device.

As a matter of detail, I may add that I have found it convenient to keep by me envelopes addressed to those with whom I desire to communicate frequently upon matters of common interest, to insert the slips as they were written, and to send the letter as occasion arose.

Among those who have more or less fully co-operated with me in the use of slips in correspondence, should be named, especially, Dr. F. P. Foster, editor of the New-York *Medical journal;* Prof. H. F. Osborn of Princeton college; and my colleague, Prof. S. H. Gage. B. G. WILDER.

Ithaca, N.Y., Dec. 26.

American pearls.

Remembering an inquiry in a back number of *Science* regarding pearls, I thought it perhaps worth recording that small black pearls are not infrequent in the common Venus fluctifraga V. succincta, and V. simillima of this coast. We also occasionally find white pearls in the larger Pachydesma crassatelloides. Haliotis splendens and H. Cracherodii are often pearl-bearers, pearls found in them often being of value and quite pretty. Martesia intercalata buries itself in the shell of Haliotis; and upon boring through, as it often does, the abalone covers the opening with a black, pearly layer, that frequently becomes a large protuberance on the inside of the shell.

C. R. ORCUTT.

San Diego, Cal.

The earthquake of Jan. 2.

The earthquake of Jan. 2 was felt distinctly in Washington. Making allowance for the error of my watch, the shock occurred at 9 h. 12.1 m. P.M., eastern standard time, and lasted ten or twelve seconds, accompanied by a rumbling sound, a rattling of windows, and a 'chattering,' jarring, unpleasant sensation communicated from the floor of the room in which I was sitting. The place of observation was about twenty-three hundred feet north-east of the naval observatory. The time may be half a minute in error, either way. WILLIAM C. WINLOCK.

Washington, D.C., Jan. 4.

[1] Read before the Society of naturalists of the eastern United States, Dec. 29, 1884.

THE PROSPECTS OF THE NEW PSYCHICAL SOCIETY.

THE STORY of the persecution of Galileo is now familiar to every one. In those days the church had ordained a certain system for the universe, and was disturbed by the discoveries of scientific men. Exactly the same feeling has been shown by two or three scientific men of the present day with regard to the prosecution of investigations of certain so-called psychical phenomena. One of our foremost scientific men has been heard to say, that, if the facts claimed to be true by the committee on thought-transference of the English society for psychical research were true, life would not be worth living. Men of this stamp say that they cannot in any way, or by any proof, be led to believe in the facts; but they would have all study of the alleged phenomena suppressed.

It is very fortunate that men of this 'dark-age' frame of mind are in the minority. Any one who saw the reception among scientific men which was given last summer to Professor Barrett, the emissary of the English society for psychical research, would see how deep-seated is the interest in such investigations, in spite of a healthy scepticism. There is no longer a feeling that such matters can be laughed out of court. As one result of Professor Barrett's visit, at a meeting held in Boston in September, a committee was appointed to consider the formation of an American society on a similar plan to that which Professor Barrett represented. A professorship had already been established in the University of Pennsylvania, and a man appointed to the chair who should devote his time more especially to the study of the physical manifestations known as spiritualism; a late wealthy citizen of Philadelphia having bequeathed a