writers on science in Germany is as great as that of any other nation. I believe the following names, to which scores of others could be added, will bear out my statement: Georg Forster (the companion of Cook), A. von Humboldt, Liebig, Moleschott, Carl Vogt, Schleiden, Peschel, Helmholtz, Otto Ule (of Halle), Rossmaessler, Haeckel, Preyer, etc. Who is to be the judge as to a good German style, those who know the language as foreigners, or those who know it as natives? What would become of scientific criticism, if people may ridicule with impunity whatever differs from the standard to which they are accustomed? How does 'M.' suppose a rather long and involved English sentence, though correctly formed and considered elegant, sounds to a German who translates it literally? In a recent issue of *Science* (Jan. 7) another German sentence is quoted; and this, too, is neither a bad nor an obscure one, although it is not claimed that an advertisement—and such the sentence is—may be taken as a model of a lucid and graceful style. The number of poor writers in German is not great, in spite of all that has been written on the subject. The number of finished writers of peculiar excellence is probably as great in Germany as in France, England, or the United States.

C. A. EGGERT.

Iowa City, Io., Jan. 7.

The West Indian seal.

Since the publication of my article on this species in the last number of *Science* (ix. 35), Mr. F. W. True of the U. S. national museum has kindly called my attention to a paper on this subject by himself and Mr. F. A. Lucas, in the Smithsonian report for 1884 (part ii. pp. 331–335, plates i.–iii.), recently distributed, which I had not at that time seen. In this paper the species is positively referred to the genus Monachus, and the cranial characters are described and figured. The specimen forming the basis of this paper is the one presented to the U. S. national museum by Professor Poey, as stated in *Science*, iii. 752. This was a skin, containing the skull, of the specimen taken near Havana in 1883. The specimen is described as "a female, . . . apparently adult, though not aged." The description of the size and color, and the figures of the skull, however, show it to have been quite young, not more than two-thirds grown, and probably in its second year, the skull-sutures being still open, while in the adult, as in other seals, those of the cranium proper are wholly obliterated.

On the assumption that their specimen was adult, Messrs. True and Lucas believe that "the West Indian seal must be considerably smaller than M. albiventer" of the Mediterranean. The specimens obtained by Mr. Ward show that there is practically no difference in size or color between specimens of corresponding ages of the two species of subtropical seals. Many of the discrepancies in the proportions of the skull in the two forms, alluded to by True and Lucas, are clearly due, in large part at least, to the immaturity of their specimen of M. tropicalis. My largest male skulls even slightly exceed the measurements given by Cuvier for the Mediterranean species. I find the length of my adult male skeleton, measured along the curvature of its axis, to be seven and a half feet; measured in a straight line, seven and one-tenth feet, or 85 inches. The length of the stuffed skin of the Havana specimen, as given by True and Lucas, is only 53 inches. In view, however, of the widely separated habitats of the two forms, there is every probability of their specific distinctness, and adequate material doubtless would reveal numerous minor structural differences.

As compared with other species of the family Phocidae, the skeleton of M. tropicalis presents notable peculiarities, particularly in the form of the scapula, the pelvis, the proportions of the limb-bones, etc., as well as in the low position of the mandibular condyle, referred to by True and Lucas. The scapula, for example, is remarkably short and broad, the length to the breadth being as 16 to 28, both the anterior and posterior borders being greatly developed. The acromion process is well marked; but the spine is low and short, forming little more than a well-marked ridge, in comparison with its usual development in other phocids. The pelvis is remarkably short and broad: the thyroid foramina are fully half as broad as long. The femur is very short and thick, not longer than in Phoca vitulina, notwithstanding the much greater size of the animal, the same being true likewise of the pelvis. Throughout the skeleton the proportion of parts is rather exceptional, the fore-limbs being much more developed, relatively to the hind-limbs, than in the seals generally. As I stated in 1870 (*Bull. mus. comp. zoöl.*, ii. No. 1, p. 30), Monachus much more nearly approaches the Otariidae than does any other genus of the Phocidae, through its skeletal proportions and peculiarities. The animal is in form very robust. The bones are thick and heavy, with the apophyses of the vertebrae strongly developed. Further details, however, must await the appearance of my illustrated memoir on this species, now in preparation for early publication in the Bulletin of the American museum of natural history.

To Messrs. True and Lucas is due the credit of first making known, in their paper above cited, the cranial characters of the West Indian seal, and of confirming its reference to the genus Monachus; and I much regret not having seen their valuable contribution when I penned my former notice of the species. While the 'Report' containing their paper bears date '1885,' it appears not to have been generally distributed till some time in December, 1886.

J. A. ALLEN.

New York, Jan. 14.

On hybrid dogs.

If my memory serves me correctly, I think it was Dr. Coues who pointed out the fact somewhere, in one of his works, that he had personally known of cases of fertile crosses having taken place between the coyoté (Canis latrans) and that species of semi-domesticated dog found with nearly all the Indian tribes of this country. His instances were cited, however, I believe, for the Sioux camps of the Indian agencies of certain parts of Dakota.

Now, a year ago there came under my observation here an interesting case of this kind, the occurrence having taken place at Zuñi, in south-western New Mexico. Zuñian Indians have many varieties of wolfish-looking dogs at their pueblo, while coyotés are always found prowling about on the surrounding prairies. Such circumstances as these, granting that these animals will cross, are as favorable as any we could imagine; for the pueblo, with the ends of its streets leading in the majority of instances directly out upon the prairie, affords the opportunity, not