LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

***The attention of scientific men is called to the advantages of the correspondence columns of* SCIENCE *for placing promptly on record brief preliminary notices of their investigations. Twenty copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent on request.*

The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as proof of good faith.

A folk-lore and dialect society.

YOUR editorial comment on the proposition to found a folk-lore and dialect society in this country is, in my opinion, exceedingly opportune. When the American historical association was organized a few years ago, your correspondent and Prof. H. B. Adams exchanged views on the feasibility of establishing such a society as auxiliary to the work of the association. The plan, however, fell to the ground, until, a few weeks ago, a gathering of scholars interested particularly in American folk-lore met at Cambridge, Mass , and formed the nucleus of a promising society for its investigation. The invaluable work accomplished by the English dialect society, and by such publications as *Melusine* in France and Germany, shows what intelligent effort can do in this direction to save from oblivion the relics, linguistic and superstitional, of the past. All philologists know that the study of dialects — dialectology — is of extreme importance to the scientific linguist; for in the dialects are often found archaic pronunciations, idioms, usages, which point to a more ancient time than the pronunciations, idioms, and usages prevalent among those who speak the standard tongue. In this manner, dialect studies in modern Greek, modern Italian, Spanish, and German have contributed abundantly to the explanation of phenomena in those languages otherwise inexplicable. In this country, where dialects were supposed to be non-existent, or to have been obliterated by the levelling influence of the common school, they are really found, on closer inspection, to abound. Noticing this many years ago, the subscriber contributed to the *Baltimore journal of philology* (iii. No. 2) a paper on 'The Creole [negro] patois of Louisiana,' which was part of a plan to embrace studies in 'Greaser Spanish' (Texas, New Mexico, California), 'The Hoosier dialect of the middle states,' 'The cracker dialect of Georgia, East Tennessee, and North Carolina' (as outlined by R. B.), 'Pennsylvania Dutch' (after Holdeman), 'New Englandisms,' and 'Negro English.' The first and last only of this series have been as yet, though very imperfectly, executed. The essay on negro English was about fifty pages octavo in length, and was published in full, as a tolerably complete grammar of negro, in *Anglia* (Leipzig, Germany, 1884). A *résumé* of it was read before the American philological association, which met at New Haven in July, 1885; and a brief abstract of the paper appears among its Proceedings for that year. Negro usage abounds with linguistic curiosities, obsolescent idioms, twists and turns descended from the Elizabethan or Jacobin settlers; and along with these goes a world of quaint superstitions, proverbs, charms, 'saws and sayings,' that reveal a peculiarly naïve and old-world turn of mind and imagination. The Society for psychical research ought certainly to investigate this *terre vierge*, rich with the stratified folk-lore of ages, enamelled with flowers of African parentage, replete with scraps of custom and myth which might throw light on the prehistoric period in the life of nations. A sojourn at the Virginia Springs might open to the attentive folk-lorist of the north, armed with a memorandum-book, stores inexhaustible of southern *mährchen;* for here southern society congregates, conversation is still a fine art, and the long evenings of summer are most provocative of meditative reminiscence. Mr. Gomme's proposed manual for the scientific gathering and classification of all this legendary lore will doubtless prove priceless to such summer sojourners. The south is peculiarly fertile in all the conditions through which the curious beliefs, customs, and narratives you editorially comment upon are handed down from generation to generation; nay, are even generated under our very noses. Let the Folk-lore society and the American dialect society come and gather while the hills are white with harvest. It requires no exceptionally gifted pen to take down what one hears and sees all around one. A series of intelligently articulated circulars, with pregnant hint and clear suggestion, sent out under the auspices of these societies, would doubtless elicit lists of words and descriptions of customs and folk-lore prevalent in particular localities, and these could gradually be elaborated and systematized into a volume. By all means, let these societies go to work without loss of time, and both co-operate to a common end.

JAMES A. HARRISON.

Washington and Lee univ.,
Lexington, Va., June 1.

The idea of a civil academy.

The idea of a civil academy at Washington, as developed by Dr. Herbert B. Adams, in Circular of information No. 1, 1887, bureau of education, seems to have met with a varying reception from the public press. Condemned by some journals and highly commended by others, the conspicuous attention which it has attracted is the best proof that it is not a mere Utopian dream.

I believe myself that a civil academy is not merely desirable, but that in the no distant future it will be a necessity. The opinions of many government officials who have held positions of administrative responsibility justify this statement. Only recently a gentleman who has long been prominently connected with the public service expressed the conviction that he would yet see the bulk of the higher offices distributed on the basis of competitive merit, in place of being bestowed as the reward of political labors. However this may be, there can hardly be any doubt that civil-service principles have come to stay; and the significance of this fact in the present connection is that a strong demand is thus created for men thoroughly trained and specially fitted, particularly for higher branches of government work. The sentiment has been well expressed by Col. Carroll D. Wright, whose fifteen years of public administrative experience should entitle his views to considerable weight. In an address recently delivered before the joint session of the American historical and Economic associations at Cambridge, on the study of statistics in colleges, he said, "The extension of civil-service principles must become greater and greater, and the varied demands which will be created by their growth logically become more exacting; so that the possibilities within the application of such principles are therefore not ideal, but practical, in their nature. And these

potentialities in the near future will enhance the value of the services of the trained statistician. The consular and diplomatic service, as well as other fields of government administration, come under the same necessity."

One of the objections urged against the civil academy is that we have already plenty of colleges, amply equipped with facilities for political education, — a point which is sufficiently answered by the distinction between 'political science' and 'political praxis.' Political science can be acquired in a tolerably satisfactory manner in many of our institutions of learning, but political praxis is the special product of contact and experience with administrative work. An academy in Washington, with the most favorable environment that could be found, for the prosecution of theorecical studies, and which furnishes contemporaneously the opportunity for apprenticeship work, manifestly embodies the ideal thing.

Without contesting what seems to be a favorite proposition with many journalists, that 'American statesmen come up from the masses,' that they, like poets, are born, not made, it is only fair to add that the country has likewise suffered much from assumed heaven-born genius in high places. This fact we are too apt to lose sight of, and think only of conspicuous examples of statesmanship where the only educational training has been the village school. Is it not true that more statesmen who have come up from the masses have turned out to be incubi to congressional society than glittering lights in the political firmament? No argument can be founded upon the statement before mentioned, for it is certain that no genius would be spoiled by scientific political study; that much might be developed that otherwise would never be utilized.

The strong point of the civil academy is its practical side. Leaving out the disputed question of government aid to higher education, there can be no doubt of the wisdom of expenditure which will create trained and skilful administrators. Colonel Wright says, "The government should supplement college-training with practical administrative instruction, acquired through positive service in its own departments." Statesmen may be born, but administrators must be made. What may be understood as technical training is as much required for them as for the army and navy officer. Whether we will or no, the complexity of modern state life is increasing, is certain to increase still more, and we must prepare to meet the change. I do not think we can check the growth of state interference in matters which were once considered of purely personal and private concern, but we can and must regulate it. How? In two ways, — by multiplying the means for obtaining accurate information upon economic and social conditions, and by basing legislation upon ascertained facts. Congressmen must be able to do more than put themselves 'on record' in favor of labor: they must grasp the true inwardness of the labor-problem in its details. Administrators must not be content with the performance of perfunctory duties: they must be ready, when called upon, to furnish facts suggestive of useful constructive legislation. The training of both must be provided for, and the civil academy offers the combination of advantages to be desired.

E. R. L. GOULD.

Washington, D.C., June 4.

Sea-sickness.

It is true that many deaf-mutes are known to have enjoyed what seems to be a surprising immunity from sea-sickness; but it cannot be said, that, as a class, they are exempt from the misery we all so much dread.

I travelled last summer on the Pacific Ocean with a number of deaf-mutes, some of whom paid their tribute to Neptune with the best of us who hear.

It is my opinion, however, that there is ground for Dr. James's statement (*Science*, June 3), if care be taken not to say that a deaf-mute cannot be made sea-sick.

If I may say a word from my own experience of a number of ocean-voyages, with a decided tendency to be sea sick, I think great help may be had by keeping in one's berth at the first approach of rough weather, eating moderately, and not rising until the processes of digestion and assimilation have had time to be quite fully completed after at least two or three meals. E. M. GALLAUDET.

Kendall Green, Washington, June 4.

Garbage-disposal.

Your note as to garbage-disposition in Milwaukee does not express the present state of affairs. The health officers of the surrounding towns have forbidden the entrance of garbage-wagons into their districts. At present many plans are under discussion, but none has yet been fixed upon. The furnace plan finds much favor. ARTHUR STEVENS.

Milwaukee. Wis., June 4.