on the Chicago River. Taking an Archer Avenue car from down town we soon found the limestone quarries for which we were seeking. At this place the Niagara Limestone crops out, and having been found to produce a very good quality of lime, has been extensively mined and large lime kilns erected.

Having obtained a permit from the office of the Lime Company, we descended into the pit, which, on looking up from the bottom, appeared like a large amphitheatre of rock.

They had just finished blasting before we arrived, hence we found the place most favorable for collecting fossils. For several hours we climbed over the rough masses of rock, hammer in hand and stowed away in a large bag the choice specimens found. The most abundant fossil was an undetermined species of Macrostylocrinus, of which we collected several dozen fine specimens. Next in abundance was the large crinoid *Siphonocrinus nobilis*, Hall, of which we collected eighteen choice specimens, also specimens of the following crinoids: *Eucalyptocrinus chicagœnsis, E. rotundus, Holocystites alternatus*, and *Caryocrinus ornatus*, Say. The most abundant coral was *Japhrentis Turbinatum*, Hall. We also found *Platyceras Campanulatum, Amphicœlia, neglecta*, McChesney, Trilobites, Brachiopods, and a very fine Ammonite.

In this way one interested in geology, while visiting Chicago, may fill in an odd day by collecting some interesting specimens. PAUL VAN RIPER.

Niles, Mich.

COON CATS.

SPEAKING of cats, I saw, in a private house in Chicago recently, two cats which the owners called "coon cats." They had been obtained in the edge of the forest around Moosehead Lake, and it was claimed that they were hybrids, or descendants of hybrids of the domestic cat and the raccoon. They were larger than the ordinary house cat, had very coon-like countenances and bushy coon-like tails that were always expanded. One had the habit of ascending something high and resting stretched out, and their motions when in a little hurry were a coon-like gallop.

The claws were retractile, the foot digitigrade. I did not examine the dentition, but could find nothing but appearance that indicated a coon kinship. They interbred with the common cat. Can some one tell me more about them? J. N. BASKETT.

Mexico, Mo., Aug. 28.

DAMAGE TO COTTON BY LIGHTNING.

THE communication of Mr. Frank E. Emery on "Damage to Cotton by Lightning" in your issue of Sept. 8, prompts me to communicate the following facts, bearing directly on Mr. Emery's subject.

For thirty years prior to 1890 some cotton fields at Goldsboro, N. C., owned by the State for the use of the Colored Insane Asylum, have been "struck" by lightning. Occasionally the fields were spared, and then again they suffered two or three times a year. Each stroke would destroy from one-quarter to one-half an acre. The lightning would strike very near the same place every year. In the year 1890 electric light wires were run from the city lighting plant to the Asylum. During the summers of 1890 and 1891 the poles near where the lightning was accustomed to strike, were badly split up. In the summer of 1892 lightning arresters were placed near these points, and since that time there has been no trouble from lightning. Since the wires have been strung on this pole line, lightning has not struck the fields, the wires protecting them perfectly.

These facts are vouched for by a gentleman residing in Goldsboro, who lived on the farm above mentioned before it came into the possession of the State and for the last few years has been manager of the electric plant, thus being acquainted with all lightning troubles that his plant has had to contend with. A. F. MCKISSICK.

Auburn, Ala., Sept. 23.

RHYTINA GIGAS LINN. AT PRINCETON.

IN numbers 522 and 523 of *Science* may be found descriptions of the skeleton of Steller's Sea-Cow (*Rhytina gigas Linn.*) as preserved in the various museums. The Museum at Princeton, New Jersey, has lately come into the possession of a most beautiful set of casts of *Rhytina*, which were obtained from Mr. Robert F. Damon, of Weymouth, England, and are an exact reproduction of the originals found at Behring's Island, and secured by the late Robert Damon, F. G. S., through Dr. Dybowski and presented to the British Museum of Natural History at South Kensington. (*vide* description by Dr. H. Woodward, F. R. S., Quart. Jour. Geol. Soc., 1885, XLI., pp. 457-72). The casts in the Princeton Museum are the following: cranium and jaw (length 68cm) brain cavity, dorsal, lumbar and caudal vertebræ, five cervical vertebræ, atlas and axis, three auditory ossicles, scapula, humerus, radius and ulna. JOHN EYERMAN.

Oakhurst, Easton, Pa., Sept. 22.

SUGAR FROM CORN STALKS.

MR. STEWART'S articles on this subject were intensely interesting and his investigations will doubtless lead to important economic results. As an item of news in this connection I may say that I have a neighbor who made sugar from corn stalks nearly forty years ago. She extracted the sucrose partly by diffusion (boiling the stalks in water) and then by pressure and obtained a sugar nearly white in color and excellent in flavor and sweetening power. A. STEVENSON.

Arthur, Ontario.

"CURIOUS EARS OF INDIAN CORN."

MR. HERSHEY, a recent correspondent in *Science*, speaks of a maize plant producing a cob at the summit of the stalk where we usually find only the tassel of staminate flowers. Such cases, I think, cannot be uncommon, I observed three last year within a small plot of a few square yards. This year a neighbor showed me an even more curious variation of the same kind. The stalk terminated in a spike of about 8 inches long, the upper half of which had contained staminate flowers, while the lower half, which was considerably stouter, contained immature grains. It was in fact a small cob without husks. and the grains were greenish in consequence. Branching off from the stalk at the base of the cobs were two slender pedicels of the remains of staminate flowers. The cob on this specimen contained no staminate flowers, but they were quite numerous on the stunted cobs which I saw last year. A. STEVENSON.

Arthur, Ontario.

EVOLUTION OF SCIENCE TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

IN *Science*, No. 554, Dr. George G. Groff well shows how insufficient are the means provided in certain professional schools, for properly instructing and training teachers for science teaching in secondary and primary schools. The numerical results of his tabulations certainly place the normal schools of Pennsylvania on the side of tradition as against progress. The ratio of grammar teachers to science teachers is five to four, and the number of teachers of mathematics is approximately that of the teachers of science.