

titia, concluding that Linnæus meant by it *Prunus domestica Damascena*, while Gray applied it to *Prunus spinosa*, and Walter to *Prunus angustifolia*. Walter H. Evans describes a new branch from Alaska. A fascicle of Book Reviews, Notes for Students, and News complete the number, which is the concluding one of Volume XXVII.

At the annual meeting of the American Medical Association Dr. George M. Gould, of Philadelphia, proposed that the publication of the *Index Medicus* should be undertaken by the Association. He moved the following resolution, which was referred to the Board of Trustees:

WHEREAS, the suspension of the publication of the *Index Medicus* is a deplorable event, which will result in greatly increased labor on the part of medical men in their literary work, and seriously hindering the progress of medical science, practical as well as literary.

Be it therefore Resolved, That the Executive Committee of the American Medical Association appoint a committee of three members of the Association to take charge of the publication of the periodical, perfect plans for the same and engage the service of an editor and of such editorial assistance as may be required; also to choose a publisher and to make contracts with him for the printing, distribution, etc., of the work all in such manner as to continue the high standards of accuracy and bibliographic usefulness so well established by the previous publishers.

Resolved, That the Treasurer be instructed to pay all bills of such Committee in payment of necessary expenses of such editing and publication, providing that this outlay does not exceed annually \$3,000.

DR. H. C. MULLER, of Utrecht, Holland, is preparing to publish an *International Journal of Linguistics*, which is to follow the lines of the *International Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft*, which was discontinued after the death of its editor, Dr. Techmer, of Leipzig.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

THE U. S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY.

I HAVE been very much interested in the discussions which have appeared in SCIENCE regarding the Naval Observatory, but, so far as I can learn, certain points have been overlooked which ought to be brought out very plainly.

In the first place, it was really intended by

those members of Congress who were influential in having the institution established that it should be devoted chiefly to scientific work. The label of 'Depôt of Charts and Instruments' was added to it, and the plea of utility was employed, because it was feared that the public would not support a scientific institution. For this reason, also, the institution was placed under the Navy Department, since the salaries of the professors and officers engaged in astronomical work would come from the pay of the Navy and would not appear under the Observatory appropriations.

Though a number of eminent men have been in charge of the Naval Observatory, the chief criticism to be made regarding it would seem to me to be the lack of a continuous, well-defined policy. Our Navy has been built up at times and then been allowed to run down, and the line officers have had but little to do. At such times they want control of everything connected with the service, and the scientific work of the Observatory has had to go to the wall. This was the case for some years before the War of the Rebellion, and also about 1882. Of course, a number of the line officers who have been at the Observatory have been able men, who, with time enough given them, could learn anything or do anything. The reason why they did not do well in astronomical work usually was that it took them too far from the profession for which they had been trained.

Logically, I think the Naval Observatory should be placed under scientific management and taken from the Navy, but, as affairs are really managed under our government, with a chance for the methods of the practical politician, I am not so sure. Several years ago an attempt was made to change the organization of the Observatory, and the Naval Committee of the House of Representatives gave a hearing to those interested in the matter. Judging from that hearing, several questions of this kind will have to be answered in the present discussion.

If the work of the Naval Observatory is compared with that of other large observatories in this country, both as to quality and cost, has not the naval management been as good as any other in this country?

Is the present movement being pushed for the benefit of any particular person? This question was asked at the hearing referred to by the Chairman of the Committee.

Are there not already too many detached organizations scattered throughout the departments of the government in such a manner that their business affairs cannot be properly supervised?

This objection might be met by saying that all the scientific work of the government should be brought together under one department, under proper supervision, and with committees in Congress to look after it. Indeed, it seems to me likely that Congress would pass some general measure of this kind rather than take up special legislation for the Observatory alone.

A. HALL, JR.

ANN ARBOR, June 30, 1899.

CEREBRAL LIGHT AGAIN.

IN 1897 Dr. Scripture contributed a note to *SCIENCE* (SCI. 6, p. 138, July 23) on what he calls 'cerebral light.' Soon afterward (SCI. 6, p. 257, Aug. 13) I tried to show that whether the phenomena described was of cerebral origin or not the observations of Dr. Scripture did not prove it. I fear Dr. Scripture did not see my criticism.

Now, again, Dr. Scripture brings forward (SCI. 9, p. 850, June 16, 1899) what he thinks demonstrative proof of cerebral origin. Observing the cerebral figures in the early dawn, and looking at the window, he was able to see the figure in the frame of the window. "Now," says he, "placing the fingers of the two hands against the outer ends of the two eyeballs, I displaced them simultaneously in opposite directions. As a result there appeared two images of the frame moving in opposite directions. But the retinal figures seen in front of the frame remained single and *did not move*. Granting that there was no error in my observations, I cannot imagine a more conclusive proof as to the cerebral nature of the light."

Now, I freely grant that there was no error in his observation, yet his conclusion does not follow. In proof of this it is only necessary to make the same experiment with any after-image, say that of the sun. I have just done

so. *It behaves in exactly the same way as his cerebral figures.* The reason is obvious. When we press on the sides of the eyeballs external images of *objects* move in the field of view because their retinal images move on the retina. But retinal brands do not move on the retina and, therefore, their spatial representatives do not move in the field of view. I pointed this out in my previous criticism, and this is the reason I think that Professor Scripture did not see it.

As to whether the phenomenon described, or, indeed, any after-image, is retinal or cerebral I have nothing to say. Whether a change in a cerebral cell has its origin in a peripheral impression (retinal), or in the course of an optic fiber, or in the cell itself, it may be difficult to say.

JOSEPH LE CONTE.

BERKELEY, CAL., June 28, 1899.

POT-HOLE VS. REMOLINO.

TO THE EDITOR OF *SCIENCE*: The term 'pot-hole,' so frequently applied, of late, to rounded cavities formed by rivers in their rockbeds, is inelegant and grates harshly on people of sensitive temperament. I suggest, in place of it, the Spanish word *remolino*, which is the common designation in the Republic of Colombia, for phenomena of this order.

OSCAR H. HERSHEY.

FREEPORT, ILL., June 19, 1899.

ASTRONOMICAL NOTES.

PROPER MOTION.

A VALUABLE contribution to the list of stars with proper motions is made by Professor Porter, Director of the Cincinnati Observatory, in Publication No. 14 of that Observatory. This is in continuation of similar studies previously published, and contains the results of meridian-circle observations of 2,030 stars made between 1893 and 1898, and a careful comparison with earlier observations. A large number of the stars have an appreciable proper motion.

FUNDAMENTAL STAR CATALOGUE.

THERE has recently been distributed Vol. VIII., Part II., of the publications of the Nautical Almanac Office, which contains Professor