

## Answers to Correspondents.

The Editors will be pleased to answer any queries under this heading, but should the answers be required by post a fee of 10 cents must accompany the inquiry. All queries must be accompanied by the name and address of the sender.

**FISHERMAN:** We do not think the may-fly ever sleeps, or even rests. Its life lasts only a few hours, during which it flies about incessantly over the surface of the water.

Many fish do not sleep, though some do. Among the non-sleepers are salmon, pike, gold-fish and angler fish.

This is an old question, and some very careful and interesting experiments were made in London a short time ago, with the results stated above.

**PHILO:** Of modern languages, there is no doubt that English stands at the head of the list in extent of vocabulary. It has borrowed from all other civilised tongues, living or dead, and even from barbarous ones, and has coined for its express necessities many conglomerate, scientific, and other terms, so that whereas in the infancy of lexicography 20,000 words were thought to be the extreme limits a complete dictionary could reach, ordinary school dictionaries now boast of 100,000, while the great publications such as the "Encyclopædic," the "Century," and the "New English Historical" attain or exceed, 250,000, and its growth does not cease for a day. French and German may be counted as coming next. Going farther afield, Arabic is, of Eastern tongues, by far the richest in vocabulary. At the other end of the scale, many savage races have extremely limited vocabularies. Possibly the Bushmen have the poorest. Letourneau says they are unable to talk in the dark, their scanty speech having to be eked out with gestures. The Veddahs, of Ceylon have only words which express the simplest acts of their daily life, and the things they see around them. The Tasmanians have no adjectives, and are so far from any knowledge of abstract term that they have no word for "tree," though they have names for various kinds of trees. Peculiarly enough, the Chinese, with all their ancient though strange civilization, have a very limited vocabulary. Professor Whitney estimates it at 15,000 words. Being monosyllabic, it is inflexible, and permits no growth. Still, by the use of varied tones and accents, they are able to express many different meanings by the same word. This Huxley illustrates by the word *chow*, which may mean, according to tone, "ship," "fluff," "loquacity," "basin," or "flickering," each meaning being expressed in their ideographic writing by the addition of various lines in the simplest forms.

The first question asked in our columns was as to the history and whereabouts of the kingdom of Sedang. We were unable to give any but a brief and somewhat vague answer, but now, thanks to the same Liverpool correspondent, we have received full particulars, in the shape of an extract from an old number of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. We think it is sufficiently interesting to republish in full:—

"In the literary and artistic world of Paris, a few years ago there figured an eccentric personage named Meyrena, a man about town who was generally regarded as somewhat feather brained. He was always talking of his wonderful adventures and travels in unexplored regions. One fine day he suddenly disappeared. No one was much surprised, or took any trouble to ascertain what had become of him. Several years, have elapsed. Meyrena reappeared as suddenly as he had departed, and became once more a familiar figure on the boulevards. Now, however, his recitals were more marvellous than ever. "You must understand," he would say to his friends, "that you are now conversing with royalty I am king of the Sedangs." Every one concluded that the poor fellow was mad, but, much to the general surprise, it was found that his story was partly true. Meyrena had succeeded in penetrating into some unexplored territory beyond Indo-China and after having lived for some time in the midst of a people known as the Sedangs, he had assumed a certain post of semi-regal authority. On returning to Paris he formed the audacious project of negotiating a treaty with the French Government, placing his pseudo-kingdom under the protection of France. As

may be readily imagined, his proposal was treated as a joke. Greatly discouraged, Meyrena returned to his dominions, and nothing more was heard of him till the other day, when a report of his death was circulated. No details were obtainable, and it was not until the arrival of the Indo-China mail at Marseilles that any particulars of this extraordinary career transpired. It appears that Meyrena had established himself on the Island of Troman, near Singapore, with a number of Chinese-Egyptians, an Englishman named Scott, and a Frenchman named Villeroy. They obtained their provisions from Singapore and from Epadse. Each member of the singular fraternity had his governmental functions clearly defined. Villeroy was Physician in Ordinary to the King; Scott was Minister of Public Works and Chancellor of the Exchequer, his budget being, in the outset at all events, a purely imaginary one. The proceedings led the British authorities to suspect that Meyrena was endeavoring to convert the island into a resort of pirates especially as his operations were coincident with certain turbulent outbreaks on the part of the Malays. It is thought that Meyrena committed suicide in order to escape from the embarrassments of his position. Both Villeroy and Scott had deserted him, and he does not appear to have derived any support from his so-called subjects, as according to the latest reports he was at the time of his death in absolute want.

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