...cieties of amateurs." If this is a joke, why, Dundreary like, "I don't see it." If it is meant to express a real belief in the superiority of amateurs, it is a fatal mistake. *Experto crede*, Mr. Editor. I have been a great sinner in that way. In every line of character and in every size of stage, from the biggest theatre to the smallest drawing-room, have I bored my admiring friends. And thus much, at least, my experience has taught me, that acting demands long and conscientious study from those who would profess the art themselves, or criticise it in others. "Histriomastix," by his own showing, has not learnt this lesson; and I believe such tirades as his to be quite as harmful as the system of "rapid puffing" he rightly condemns. The language in which he indulges might have exposed him, had he lived in another age, to much the same punishment as befell the old writer whose signature he so modestly assumes.—I am, &c., F. D.

PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY AND THE BALLOT.

To the Editor of THE READER.

Sir,—In the review, headed as above, in your last number, and signed "J. S. M.," the well-known writer does not appear to me to have been quite successful in answering the arguments of the pamphlet he criticises. Indeed, on the most important point, his own reasoning seems equally applicable to the opposite side of the question. I beg leave, therefore, to make a few observations on what appears to me, as I doubt not it must to many of your readers, a very inconclusive part of his article.

Mr. Mill truly says, that a voter is rarely influenced by "the fraction of a fraction of an interest, which he as an individual may have, in what is beneficial to the public," but that his motive, if uninfluenced by direct bribery or threats, is simply "to do right," to vote for the man whose opinions he thinks most true, and whose talents seem to him best adapted to benefit the country. The fair inference from this seems to be, that if you keep away from a man the influences of bribery and intimidation, there is no motive left but to do what he thinks will serve the public interest—in other words, "the desire to do right." Instead of drawing this inference, however, it is concluded that, as the "honest vote" is influenced by "social duty," the motive for voting honestly cannot be so strong "when done in secret, and when the voter can neither be admired for disinterested, nor blamed for selfish conduct." But Mr. Mill has not told us what motive there can possibly be to make the man, voting in secret, vote against his own conviction of what is right. Are the plaudits of a circle of admiring friends necessary to induce a man to vote for the candidate he honestly thinks the best; and is the fear of their blame the only influence that will keep him from "mean and selfish conduct," when no possible motive for such conduct exists, and when we know that, in thousands of cases, such blame does not keep him from what is much worse than "mean and selfish conduct," taking a direct bribe?

Perhaps, however, Mr. Mill means (though he nowhere says so) that "class interest" would be stronger than public interest—that the voter's share of interest in legislation that would benefit his class or profession, would overbalance his share of interest in the welfare of the whole community. But if this be so, we may assert, first, that the social influence of those around him will, in nine cases out of ten, go to increase and strengthen the ascendency of "class interests," and that it is much more likely that a man should be thus induced to vote for class interests as against public interests, than the reverse. In the second place, we maintain that any temporary influence whatever, which would induce a man to vote differently from what he would have done by his own unbiassed judgment, is bad—that a man has a perfect right to uphold the interests of his class, and that it is, on the whole, better for the community that he should do so. For, if the voter is sufficiently instructed, honest, and far-seeing, he will be convinced that nothing that is disadvantageous to the community as a whole can be really and permanently beneficial to his class or party; while, if he is less advanced in social and political knowledge, he will solve the problem the other way, and be fully satisfied that in advancing the interests of his class he is also benefiting the community at large. In neither case, is it at all likely, or indeed desirable, that the temporary and personal influence of others' opinions at the time of an election, should cause him to vote contrary to the convictions he has deliberately arrived at, under the continued action of those same influences, and which convictions are the full expression of his political knowledge and honesty at the time?

It seems to me, therefore, that if you can arrange matters so that every voter may be enabled to give his vote uninfluenced by immediate fear of injury or hope of gain (by intimidation or bribery), the only motives left to influence him are his convictions as to the effects of certain measures, or a certain policy, on himself as an individual, on his class, or on the whole community. The combined effect of these convictions on his mind will inevitably go to form his idea of "what is right" politically, that idea which, we quite agree with Mr. Mill, will in most cases influence his vote, rather than any one of the more or less remote personal interests which have been the foundation of that idea. From this point of view, I should be inclined to maintain that the right of voting is a "personal right" rather than a "public duty," and that a man is in no sense "responsible" for the proper exercise of it to the public, any more than he is responsible for the convictions that lead him to vote as he does. It seems almost absurd to say that each man is responsible to every or to any other man for the free exercise of his infinitesimal share in the government of the country, because, in that case, each man in turn would act upon others exactly as he is acted upon by them, and thus the final result must be the same as if each had voted entirely uninfluenced by others. What, therefore, is the use of such mutual influence and responsibility? You cannot by such means increase the average intelligence or morality of the country; and it must be remembered, that the character and opinions, which really determine each man's vote, have already been moulded or even formed by the long-continued action of those very social influences which it is said are essential to the right performance of each separate act of voting. It appears to me that such influences, if they really produce any fresh effect, are a moral intimidation of the worst kind, and are an additional argument in favour of, rather than against, the ballot.

Two other questions remain. Is the ballot necessary to prevent bribery and intimidation? Is it so injurious to independence of character as to overbalance its undoubted utility? I think Mr. Berkeley's letter in the *Times* in reply to Mr. Mill, and the experience of every general election, are sufficient to answer the first question in the affirmative. The answer to the second entirely depends upon the state of civilization and independence to which we have arrived; and it seems to me that, in the days of standing armies, of an elaborate Poor Law, of State interference in education, of the overwhelming influence of wealth and the priesthood, we have not arrived at that stage of general advancement and independence of thought and action in which we ought to give up so great and immediate a benefit to thousands as real freedom of voting, for the infinitesimal advantage to the national character which might be derived from the independent and open voting of the few who would feel it compatible with their duty to their families to struggle against unfair influence and unjust intimidation. A. R. W.

ALSO QUHA VNDERSTUDE.

To the Editor of THE READER.

Sir,—Your correspondent, Mr. FitzEdward Hall, has met with hard treatment from your other controversialists as to the meaning of the phrase above. He interpreted it in the only way possible to any man who has studied Early Scotch or English. He proved his rendering by parallel passages, in a very careful note to his edition of Lander. But he was then corrected or commented on, in your columns, by two writers, who evidently were not familiar with Early Scotch or English idioms, and, without any other evidence than their own guesses or fancies, wanted us to adopt their crude renderings instead of his, which was really proven. Last week, too, Mr. Asher, because Mr. Hall said that *olo* meant *one*, tried to make him assert that he and Mätzner said *who* was derived from *one*, or *vice versa*. I need not say Mr. Hall never wrote any such nonsense. He asked for proof that the old "*ne who sayth*"—where *who*=*one*, or *they*; Fr. *on*—was still extant as Mätzner asserts it to be. Will your correspondents give us this proof, instead of finding fault with Mr. Hall's well-considered and certain interpretation of *also quha vnderstude*?

F. J. FURNIVALL.

3 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn,
May 2, 1865.

SCIENCE.

METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE.

The untimely death of the Superintendent of the Meteorological Department of the Board of Trade will, we trust, be the occasion of reconsidering the duties that should be assigned to that office. Its functions have never yet been developed to the extent which the scientific needs of the country demand; neither has it methodized those data which the widely reaching hands of our marine are prompt to procure. Let the forecasting continue, if it be desired: certainly, let the advent of storms on our coasts be signalled, and let the publications of the office contain retrospective diagrams showing what the weather really was in comparison with what had been expected. Let some scientific value be given, by these and other obvious methods, to all the operations it undertakes.

We want simple accounts of existing weather, illustrated by diagrams, and embracing the whole globe, so far as observers extend. The addition of three or four more copying clerks to the staff of the office would be sufficient to put the materials into shape. It is not a great undigested mass of elaborately-reduced observations that we want, but broad, simple generalizations, which should appear before the interest of their subject has wholly gone by. Who knows, for instance, the limit of the intense cold of last March? Who knows if the weather in the southern hemisphere sympathises, to any considerable extent, with abnormal derangements in the northern hemisphere? Nay, who knows where the east winds of spring first make their appearance on the earth's surface? Yet there is a sufficiency of data for the determination of all these questions. But they exist as vast masses of crude material which no one endeavours to correlate. The efforts that are wasted in meteorological observations for the want of the action of a central bureau is something appalling to think of.

A meteorological office ought to take in hand no more material than it can generalise; and whatever it takes in hand, it should rapidly issue in an intelligible and a pictorial form. The French Observatory now publishes daily bulletins that are freely bought by the public. Our Meteorological-office might do the same. It might work in a much more interesting manner, and yet make the issue of its bulletins self-supporting.

We want frequent maps of the progress of harvest, of haymaking, and of other agricultural subjects bearing closely on meteorology. The progress of blights, of epidemics, of cattle and grain diseases, would legitimately be noted in the same bulletins. So would the arrival or departure of migrating birds, and the first flowering of certain typical plants, and those other matters of variable periodicity to which Professor Quetelet, the head of the Meteorological Department of Belgium, has given well-deserved attention.

If the Meteorological Department of the Board of Trade were put on a proper basis, under a capable superintendent, he might compile a daily chart of interesting and valuable statistical facts. The public would also be able to purchase lithographed copies of these charts, at a price that would cover the cost of their being printed. On this basis we should be able to obtain, by a small increase to the staff of the office, and at a trifling increase of charge to the State, daily pictures of the face of England, and occasional pictures of the entire globe, showing the extent and manner in which larger areas of the earth's surface are simultaneously affected, directly or indirectly, by meteorological influences.

THE DEAD SEA.

M. Lartet has recently communicated to the French Academy of Sciences the results of a careful study he has made during the past year of the entire basin of the Dead Sea, in which work he has had the advantage of the direction of the Duke of Luynes.

Viewed in connexion with the Palestine Exploration Fund, this paper is just now of considerable interest. We therefore give a summary of the results M. Lartet has obtained.

The saltness of many Asiatic lakes, and of the Dead Sea among them, M. Lartet considers to be caused by the proximity of large quantities of rocksalt, or of earths containing rich saliferous deposits. Especially is this the case around the Dead Sea, where from time immemorial there has been known to exist the Mountain of Salt,