

4. *Vibration of the Tails of Snakes*—In a recent Note (*Spolia Zeylanica*, Vol. VII., Part XXVIII., p. 207) Mr. Abercromby calls attention to the habit of vibrating the tail indulged in by *Lachesis trigonocephalus*. In this it is not alone, and the action has often been noticed in the case of *L. gramineus*; amongst recent authors, I think that Gadow calls attention to it in his book on "Mexico," though the volume is not available here to verify the impression. Gunther (Rept. Brit. India, p. 384) also notes that "they are frequently not perceived until they prepare to dart, vibrating the tail and uttering a faint hissing sound." In this connection it is of interest to observe that the snakes of this genus usually have the tail modified in some special way, either brightly coloured or peculiarly shaped. *L. gramineus*, indeed, derives one of its synonyms (*erythrurus*) from the colour of its tail, the specimen figured by Fayrer (Thanat. Brit. India, Pl. XIV.) belonging to this form, whilst in the case of the American *L. mutus* the tail terminates in a long, thin spine, which, as Dittmars (Rept. of the World, p. 339) notes, suggests an ancestral relationship to the rattlesnakes.

It is however a fact, as Mr. Abercromby remarks, that other snakes, in nowise related to the Pit Vipers, share this peculiarity of vibrating the tail. Quite lately my *mali* brought in a specimen of *Dipsadomorphus trigonatus* which he had caught whilst clipping a hedge—a favourite haunt of this species; when placed on a bush in a vivarium, the snake struck out valiantly at anything that approached, at the same time vibrating its tail rapidly against a flat leaf and producing quite a sharp rattling noise. A few months ago I noticed the same thing in a specimen of *Lycodon aulicus* in one of my cages; when annoyed and on the defensive it repeatedly quivered its tail very rapidly, so as to produce a distinct rattling against the floor of its cage.

T. BAINBRIGGE FLETCHER.

5. On "*Megaderma lyra*."—Mr. Green's colony of *Megaderma lyra* (see *Spolia Zeylanica*, Vol. VII., Part XXVIII., p. 216) is possibly an abnormally blood-thirsty one. Last year I had frequent opportunities of observing this bat, as the bungalow in which I was living had several empty rooms, and the bats used to fly in through the open windows and suspend themselves from punkahs, &c., to eat their prey. It is noteworthy that each bat has what is presumably its own favourite perch, to which it brings all its larger prey to eat. Inspection of the remains after the bats had been feeding showed that their food had been almost entirely large Lepidoptera—mostly Sphingids and large Noctuids, amongst which *Ophideres fullonica* appeared a great favourite; I saw no remains whatever of any Vertebrates. The bats were quite bold, and often flew around the lamps in the verandah catching moths in the air or from off the



ceiling. I may add that I caught a good number of the bats and definitely identified them as *Megaderma lyra*; like Mr. Green's specimens, they were all swarming with small winged flies, some of which were sent to Europe for identification, but I have heard nothing further of them. Very similar, if not identical, winged flies were found by me on bats caught at Galle, but these latter bats were, I think, *Rhinolophus affinis*.

T. BAINBRIGGE FLETCHER.

6. *The Bell at Kayman's Gate*—On a recent visit to Jayawardhana Kotte, the Cotta of to-day, I was informed that the bell at Kayman's Gate in the Pettah was removed from the site of the Portuguese Church close to where had once stood the palace of Dharmapala. A few mornings back I examined the bell in question, and from where I was in the street an inscription was visible. A ladder was obtained from the Municipal Office, and a Fiscal's peon, boldly daring, scaled the spiked enclosure and climbed as far as he could with the help of the shaky ladder up the side of the belfry. From the disjointed letters which he deciphered from his precarious position I make out the legend, which is in two lines, to be as follows :—

AVE GRATIA PLENA DOMINUS

TECUM BENEDICTA TU INMULIERS

My informant then was correct. The bell is a Portuguese one, and I hope some enthusiast of the Dutch Reformed Church of Wolvendahl, whose property I understand the bell now is, will examine it with care to ascertain if it bears any date.

P. E. PIERIS.

7. *The Growth of Marine Organisms in Colombo Harbour*.—In a letter which I received in September, 1911, from Capt. J. A. Legge, Master Attendant, Colombo, the following interesting communication was made :—"When Dr. Chalmers was appointed to investigate the sanitary conditions of Colombo, he made a study of the harbour, and found that whilst the Teredo worm destroyed timber in most of the harbour area, it hardly touched the timber on the passenger jetty or south shore of the harbour. This he attributed to the want of scour or circulation of drainage matter at the south end of the harbour resulting in the destruction of marine life. The pilot launches, tugs, and other vessels of every department used to require cleaning about twice a year only. After the new arm of the Breakwater had been extended an appreciable distance, and particularly early this year, it was noticed that the current running out of the harbour at the south entrance had increased markedly in force, so much so that it used to sweep the divers off their work and make their work much more difficult. Synchronizing with this the harbour has become cleaner and cleaner during the last two years, and the marine growth on the craft lying off my boat-house has been



Fletcher, T. B. 1912. "On "Megaderma lyra"." *Spolia zeylanica* 8, 67–68.

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