ANKETS:

FOREIGN SCIENCE.

A late meeting of the Paris Academy of Science was entirely devoted to a report drawn up by M. Dubois, which treated of questions which cannot fail to excite general interest, wiz.: Who was the first originator of the guillotine? Does this machine produce instantaneous death? Does it create suffering? Does life and sensation exist in the head when once the latter is severed from the body? We quote from the

report of the discursion:-

It is generally believed that the guillotine was invented by a French surgeon whose name was Guillotin. This, however, appears to be an error, masmuch as the first originator of the idea seems to have been a surgeon of the name of Lons. It would, in fact, appear, according to the revelations which have been made by this learned body, that in 1792, Dr. Louis, Secretary to the Faculty of Surgery, directed a German mechanic of the name of Smith to construct a machine, with which he made ex-periments on the dead bodies issuing from the hospital at Bicetre. But by giving the kuife an oblique direction, he accomplished the decapi-tation of heads with wonderful rapidity. The first time the sentence of death was carried out by means of the guillotine was on the 25th of April, 1792. The criminal was a highwayman. The first execution of a political prisoner by this means took place on the 21st of August of the same year. From that memorable night the guillotine was kept so constantly at work that in July, 1794, the difficulty was to find a means of disposing of the corpses of its victims. It only took thirty one minutes to decapitate the twenty-one Girondists whom it was the good pleasure of the Revolu-tion to doom to death. The question M. Dubois treated is one of extreme interest. He inquires, Can life exist for any length of time to the head after it has been severed from the body? When this subject was first investigated, a belief prevailed that decapitation caused atrocious suffer-ing. Sammeranz asserted that as the soul ex-isted in the head, the agonies endured must be frightful; he maintained that the sensation-were not only physical, but moral, and in proof of this theory quoted the story of Charlotte Corday having blushed when the executioner struck her cheek. Professor Sue went still further, and asserted that pain was telt, not in the head alone, but in the trunk and limbs. M. Dubous does not admit the possibility of suffer-ing after decapitation. He writes thus:—"Every circumstance tends to the conviction that the victim neither experiences pain during nor after decapitation by the guillotine. I say everything conduces to this belief, as necessarily we can have no proof on the subject." Several physiologists, however, differ from this opinion. Putting aside all theoretical considerations, we may say that very exact experiments appear to demonstrate that decapitated animals experience sensation and suffer during several minutes after their heads have fallen beneath the butcher's axe. Experiments were mad-about thirty years ago in the shambles of Paris, under the superintendence of the conservateur. He gave it as his opinion that death by means of the blow of an iron club produced in ease pain, and he wished to ascertain whether de-capitation would cause a less degree of suffer-ing. Experiments were made on a hundred cows, and on an equal number of calves and sheep, and proved that the suffering after decapitation was great. During the first minute after execution the facial muscles were agitated by frightful convolsions, the mouth alternately opened and closed, the respiratory organs of the face worked, and the animal appeared to experience intense agony, and an imperative desire to breathe. On placing a finger within an inch and a half of the eye, it suddenly closed and a proposed again. Therefore the animal districts opened again. Therefore, the animal distinctly perceived the approach of a hand to its eye. At the end of a few seconds these phenomena ceared altogether. Professor Bouchut likewise made experiments on the animals in the Paris shambles, and also recognized that the death of the brain did not occur for three or four minutes. Doctors who have had the opportunity of examining the heads of decapitated animals assert the same phenomena.

DISINFECTANTS.

The Comite Committatif d'Hygiene has addressed a report to the Minister of the Interior on the disinfecting substances and processes in use in the hospitals, especially during epidemics. M. Dumas, the reporter, places ammonia, chloride of time, and phenic acid at the head of the list of disinfectants, considering them as special agents for purifying the air. Regarding unventilated cholera wards, the only precaution he prescribes is merely that of disinfecting the air; but if the wards be provided with ventilators, it is necessary to prevent the miasmata from spreading; for, when drawn in by the ventilating orinces, they are carried off to the general chimney, whence they get into the atmosphere, and so might cause infection outside of the hospital. M. Dumas, therefore, to prevent this, recommends that vessels containing chloride of lime and evolving chlorine be placed—First, on the floor of the ward, near the orifices of inspiration. Second, in the abduction pipe itself, so far as practicable. And third, in the interior of the general chimney where all the pipes meet. When a cholerate patient has died, phenic acid is sprinkled all ground the bed; in the coffin the body rests on chloride of lime, and the remainder of the space is filled with sawdust impregnated with phenic acid. Lastly, when the coffin is placed in the grave, and the latter partly filled up, a layer of chloride of lime is spread all over, and moistened with a watering-pot; the grave is then completely filled up, and chloride of lime again sprinkled upon it, but this time without

THE SUN'S RAYS. M. Le Verrier has announced to the Academy of Sciences that M. Leon Foucault's discovery of the property which silver leaf possesses of weakening the rays of the sun has been tried at the Observatory with perfect success. The establishment possesses an equatorial, the telescope of which can receive an object glass of twenty-five centimetres' diameter. It so happened that M. Secretan, the optician, had an object-glass of the diameter, and which, though not finished, was sufficiently far advanced to be of some use. This was an excellent opportunity for testing the value of the invention, without interrupting the course of daily observation.

M. Secretan lent the object-glass, which, being covered with silver leaf, was found, as stated, to weaken the glare sufficiently to allow or its being observed with impunity, and also to diminish the heat which often accumulates in the instrument to such an extent as to crack the glasses. The sun appears of a light-blue tint, and every detail of its surface may be minutely examined. Mr. Wolf has found that the light which passes through the silver contains nearly all the rays of the spectrm except the extreme red, which, it would seem, is also the cause of the diminution of temperature; the yellow, green, and orange are also slightly weakened. weakened.

EXTINCTION OF BREEDS. In a paper addressed to the Academy of-Sciences, Dr. Guyon gave an account of the animals that have disappeared from Martinique and

One of them is a kind of dog, which existed in most of the Islands of the West Indies, and was called Antia. Raymond Broton, a Dominican triar, who landed in Guadaloupe in 1635, describes it as a dog of the savages, of middling stature, with ears erect like those of the fox. The savages trained it to nunting the pig. the acouty, and the lizard. Being accustomed to see the natives naked, these dogs evinced great antipathy for the Europeans because they were clothed. Its bark was sharper or shriller than that of other dogs. Dr. Guyon states that this dog has not only disappeared from Martinique and Guadaloupe, but also from the other islands of the West Indies. He thinks it could not be of the breed Lapproperty called can't garajeeus, Guadaloupe.

nor the same that was seen by Christopher Colombus in the Bahamas, and afterwards at Cuba, during his first voyage in 1492. That dog is distinctly stated by Columbus to have been dumb; it did not bark at all. He further stated it to have been theid, and consequently meters in the way of keeping watch, though otherwise faithful. Columbus also observed another of a very different breed at Hayti; this resembled the European pug dog. The other animals that have disappeared are two aras (a cort of large parrot), two parrots two parrots sort of large parrot), two parrots, two para quets, and a kind of frog. Don Fernando, the son of Columbus, says that his father found two large parrots, very different to any then known, in the huts of the Indians. Father Bouton describes the area to have been the second. in the buts of the indians. Father Bouton describes the ara to have been three times the size of the common parrot, and to have had a blue and forange plume. It is remarkable that Fathers Du Terte and Labat, who visited the West Indies in the seventeenth century, describe the parrots that have now disappeared, and do not mention that which still exists at St. Lucia, and which has been described by

Punctilious.—A letter trom Stockholm says that the Swedish corvette Natad, during a late voyage on the Spanish coast, saved the crew of the English steamer Gee ong, which was in distress. The captain, it is added, refused to follow his crew on board the Swedish vessel before he had shaved himself. "It would be ungentlemanly," he said, "to show myself on board a foreign vessel before I have shaved;" and the Swedish captain was obliged to wait until this operation had been effected. Scarcely had the captain got on board the Natad when his own steamer went down. steamer went down.

The Printers of Italy.—A typographical festival is to take place at Milan, in honor of the memory of Panillo Castaldi, who invented movable type. The invention of Castaldi will be immortalized by a monument, the work of a Milanese sculptor, Guiseppe Corti. An Italian paper says: "We have reason to believe that all the printers of all the Italian cities will be represented at this festival, which is to do homage to one of the glories of Italy."

The Sun—Astronomical observers will be interested to know that M. Foucault has discovered a method of diminishing the effect of the sun's rays on the focus of telescope lenses. By means of an extremely thin layer of silver placed on the object-glass, the sun can be observed without any injury to the sight. M. Foucault has communicated the particulars of his invention to the Paris Academy of Sciences.

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