not think the method would have worked, but only that the man tried wanted it to work.

T. O. M.

GREEK NUMERALS (clxxxiv. 135).—The remark of V. R. about the use of digamma as a numeral by the Greeks deserves comment, I think. The use of the 24 letters of the alphabet in order for 1 to 24 is almost confined to the two Homeric epics. The usual Greek system was decidedly simpler than the Roman, and though it lacked the cipher, very convenient for writing numbers of three figures. It is used widely on coins from the second century B.C. to the fourth century A.D.

(For readers who are not numismatists, it is well to say that while the coinage of Rome and Athens rarely bore dates, they are often found in the East, reckoned by the Seleucid era and other local eras; and the coinage of the Romans at Alexandria, Egypt, always bears the regnal year of the ruler reckoned by Egyptian years—so that the second year of Antoninus Pius began about a month after his accession.)

The highest coin date I recall is ZIX, 617, Cimmerian Bosporus. The system is this; the first nine letters represent the units, the second the tens, the third the hundreds. Thousands begin all over again, marked with a stroke for distinction. The Greek alphabet had but twenty-four letters, and therefore three had to be added; the old digamma and kappa, F and Q, were kept in proper place as 6 and 90; a variant of s, called sampi was 900; this last being very rare, although found in MSS. For speakers of English it is easy to remember that "air" spelled in Greek (AIP) gives 111. Judging from inscriptions three figures were usually written beginning with the units, Alexandrian coins however show the decimal first, the unit second. The odd form of digamma, like the left half of 0 with a curly tail beneath it occurs constantly on Imperial coins of Alexandria. Numismatic works usually have a special type for it, but the old single character for sigma tau ligated is sometimes used. I have seen at least one twentieth century Greek book dated by the Christian era in this fashion.

This information, simple as it looks, is not easy to find, and I do not recall seeing the mnemonic device AIP in print as such. I learned it orally from the great numismatist, E. T. Newell.

T. O. M.

EARLIER POISONS IN DUMAS (clxxxiv. 107, 202).—While there are dreadful and effective poisons which were probably known to the Borgias, who, even if it was not officially discovered, might have found some way of extracting cyanide from a common natural source in which it occurs in very small amounts, there is no doubt that fiction and legend have invented many far worse poisons than really exist. The prize should go to that which waits several weeks after being administered before showing any effect at all, and then kills its victim—this was attributed to the Borgias by the way. Writers of fiction for obvious reasons rather prefer not to describe real poisons except the very familiar ones. A recent writer of a detective story, priding himself on accuracy, says in a preface that his poison will not be recognized by toxicologists. Surely Dumas studied the history of poisons with fictional use alone in mind. His sources will be of interest if found, and I hope someone may find a hint in Poe’s statement that Madame Pilau was made very ill by a candle accidentally poisoned. This he says is in some French Memoirs, but I have not found out the book. I think this poison was chosen by the author because it could hardly assist a real criminal. It must antedate 1845.

Olybrius.

JEEP (clxxxiv. 139, 205).—In the popular comic strip "Thimble Theater" the chief character, Popeye the Sailor, called an automobile a jeep. The word is used regularly now for an American army motor car of particular type. Popeye is a big, rough, but heroic fellow, who gains his strength from spinach; he may be seen in the cinema, and is the subject of a popular song—perhaps we do not export his fame to England, but almost every American knows him well. It has already been pointed out in this country that this is perhaps the first time a word has been derived from an expression in a comic strip.

Olybrius.

NOTES FOR THE ‘O.E.D.’ (clxxxiv. 286).

—Cut Your Stick, which H. A. and Ed. have failed to find in ‘O.E.D.’ is at Cut (v) 43, with examples of 1825 and 1840, the former of which is earlier than anything in Planché.

St. VINCENT TROUBRIDGE.