November 3.

Mr. Thos. Meehan, Vice-President, in the chair.

Twenty-five persons present.

Virulence of the Common Parsnip.—Mr. Meehan referred to the deaths of some children, at Danville, Pa., in the spring of 1884, reputed to be caused by eating the roots of the wild parsnip. This was usually understood to mean the roots of *Cicuta maculata*, or perhaps *Conium maculatum*. Roots had been sent to him by the attendant physician, among which was the fragment of a portion that one of the dead children had partially eaten, with teeth marks on the remains. There seemed no chance for error in this case. The root, which was evidently neither of the two reputed to be virulent, was planted. It proved to be the true garden parsnip, *Pastinaca sativa*, which has become an escape from gardens in many parts of the United States. Although the evidence that the deaths were from the wild roots of the common garden parsnip appeared so conclusive, in view of the fact that there seems to be no record of such a virulent character in connection with this plant, it was thought possible there might still be some mistake, and corroborative evidence was sought for. It was found that in the cultivated form some growers are careful about weeding or working among the leaves while the dew is on them, as severe cases of poisoning have been known to result, and on large seed farms, the workmen engaged in cutting the stalks at the seed harvest, have to protect their hands and arms against contact with the juices, or they are liable to be severely poisoned in a manner similar to that from the poison vine *Rhus toxicodendron*. With these facts it seems worth placing on record what seems to be indisputable that the deaths of the Danville children were really caused by the wild garden parsnip, *Pastinaca sativa*.

November 10.

The President, Dr. Leidy, in the chair.

Twenty-four persons present.

The Shape of the Hind Limb in the Mammalia as Modified by the Weight of the Trunk.—Dr. Harrison Allen directed attention to the osseous characters of the posterior extremities in mammals, as determined by the weight borne. The shape of the hind limb in the majority of the forms is that best adapted for sustaining the weight of the hinder part of the trunk.

The head of the *femur* lies upon a neck which is relatively long;

the shaft is cylindroid, and the condylar end is expanded in all its diameters, but notably in its posterior diameter. Were a section of the condyles made by extending downward the plane of the posterior surface of the femur, the condyles would be removed in such manner as to retain in the removed segment the base of the inter-condyloid notch. If, however, the parts named be examined in the sloth, in the genus *Cylosthurus* (the two-toed arboreal ant-eater), in the bat and in the seal, the head of the femur is seen to be without a neck, or to possess a very small one. The shaft of the femur is flattened, and the condylar end is scarcely at all expanded. If a section be made as above described, the base of the condyloid notch is not removed with the section. The bone in its general features resembles the femur of the embryo.

The *fibula* in the genera bearing the weight of the body, exhibits two forms, one in which the bone is parallel to the tibia, and nearly equal to it in length, and a second in which the *distal* end is either anchylosed to the shaft of the tibia or is obliterated. In the genera which are suspended by the feet, or are otherwise free from the sustenance of weight, the fibula, when it departs from the type in which it is separate from, but co-equal with the tibia, is always reduced at the *proximal* end. In the seal the proximal end is anchylosed to the shaft of the tibia; in the bat the proximal end is entirely absent; in the sloth the proximal end, while free, is small, while the distal end is broad and highly specialized in function.

The *astragalus* is flattened and irregular in the types whose posterior extremities sustain weight, but in those free from such weight it is elongated. The tendency is seen in *Galago* and *Tarsius*, for both calcaneum and astragalus are seen to be elongated, but the tendency is carried to an extreme degree in the sloth, the bat, and in *Phoca vitulina*.

The manner of articulation in the gorilla of the fibula, with both the calcaneum and the astragalus, was dwelt upon, as well as the fact that the astragalus in that genus possesses a broad deflected fibular facet. This peculiar projection is rudimental in the astragalus of the skeleton of civilized man, but was found highly developed in an astragalus from an Indian grave found at Cooper's Point, New Jersey.

The following was ordered to be printed:—