

Science News a Century Ago

A Visit to Mount Athos

AMONG the contributions read to the Royal Geographical Society on January 9, 1837, was "An Account of an Ascent of Mount Athos and a Visit to its Mountains, in June 1836" by Lieut. Webber Smith, of the 48th Regiment. On the south-east shore of the district of Saloniki, he said, three remarkable peninsulas, twenty-five miles in length by about five miles breadth, project nearly parallel to each other, in a south-easterly direction into the Archipelago. The easternmost of these three promontories, Mount Athos, is joined to the mainland by a low sandy isthmus, about 5 miles long and nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ broad; and through which the famous canal was cut by Xerxes. The height of the central plateau of the peninsula is 250-500 feet, and from this rises a giant peak of white limestone about 6,350 feet high. The peninsula contains twenty monasteries, the whole containing about 1,500 men including 300 mendicants. At the village of Kares, a weekly fair or market is held, which presents the uncommon scene of a fair without noise, and a crowd without women; no female is on any account admitted within the precincts of the mount, nor indeed anything it is said of the feminine gender.

Darwin's Gifts to the Zoological Society

ON January 10, 1837, at a meeting of the Zoological Society, "Mr. Reid described several Mammalia, which were on the table, forming part of an extensive collection in Natural History, presented to the Society by Mr. Darwin, who accompanied the surveying ship *Beagle*, in the capacity of naturalist to the expedition. The whole contains upwards of 80 varieties, whilst the birds consist of nearly 450 specimens, including about 150 species, eleven of which from the Gallapagos Islands, were described by Mr. Gould, as being of entirely new forms to this country" (*Athenæum*).

An Epidemic of Influenza

UNDER the date January 12, the *Annual Register* for 1837 said that an influenza of a peculiar character had been raging throughout the country, and particularly in the metropolis. It was attended by inflammation of the throat and lungs, with violent spasms, sickness and headache. So general was its effects, that business in numerous instances was entirely suspended. The greater number of clerks at the War Office, Admiralty, Navy Pay Office, Stamp Office, Treasury, Post Office and other Government offices were prevented from attending to their daily avocations. Of the police force, there were upwards of 800 incapable of doing duty.

Death of Rev. William Farish

ON January 12, 1837, the Rev. William Farish died at Little Stonham, Suffolk, at the age of seventy-eight years. Born in 1759, he was the son of a clergyman of Carlisle, and after attending Carlisle Grammar School entered Magdalene College, Cambridge, as a sizar. He graduated in 1778, and was senior wrangler and Smith's prizeman. In 1794 he was appointed professor of chemistry at Cambridge, and as such he made a point of showing the application of chemical science to the arts and manufactures. In 1813 he

was appointed to the Jacksonian professorship of natural philosophy, being the successor of Francis John Hyde Wollaston (1762-1823) and the predecessor of Robert Willis (1800-75). In 1800, Farish became the incumbent of St. Giles's, Cambridge, and in 1836, rector of Little Stonham.

Dr. Roux on the Removal of Cataract

IN a note in the *Athenæum* of January 14, 1837, it is stated, "In making a report before the French Academy of Sciences, concerning the work of M. Maunoir, in favour of extraction of cataract from the eyes, M. Roux adduces the result of his own practice. Having registered all his operations during ten years, for the purpose of ascertaining which was the most efficacious method, he has been induced to give the preference to extraction. During this period he performed more than six hundred operations, as much as possible under similar circumstances, and the advantage gained by extraction was one-sixth".

Joseph Philibert Roux was born on April 26, 1780, and died on March 24, 1854, shortly after publishing "Quarante années de Pratique chirurgicale"

The British Medical Association

THE *Lancet* of January 14, 1837, contains the following notice. "The first public meeting of the members of the British Medical Association will be held at Exeter Hall in the Strand at six o'clock for seven precisely on Thursday evening next, the 19th inst. . . . This is essentially a NATIONAL association; it is open to the reception of all classes of medical practitioners; but it has been most prudently determined that the President shall always be a surgeon who is engaged in *general practice*, and that all the Councillors shall have been or shall be general practitioners. The thousands of our professional brethren have now only to unite in a spirit of cordial co-operation, under a governing body, thus qualified, constituted and interested in upholding their rights and within a very brief period the immense majority of surgeons in this country will find that they are enabled to take their proper station in Society. . . ."

Instances of Early Maturity

IN a lecture on forensic medicine delivered at the Aldersgate School of Medicine and published in the *London Medical Gazette* of January 14, 1837, Dr. William Cummin remarked that though it was only the infant produced at the ninth month of intra-uterine life that could be considered completely mature, there were numerous instances of children born at earlier periods sufficiently mature to run the normal course of human existence. Numerous old writers such as Avicenna, Schenck, Spigelius, Valesneri, Ammianus and Diemerbroeck among others had recorded examples of children having lived to adult age and even to the ordinary limits of human life though born after only five months of conception. Fortunio Luceti, according to Capuron, though born at the age of five months, lived to the age of seventy years. When born he was no bigger than a man's head. Belloc recorded the case of a female infant born about the sixth month who was only a foot long and looked like a little skinned rabbit, yet she was carefully fed and lived to woman's estate. Marshal Richelieu was recognized as viable by the parliament of Paris, although born only at five months.