

Science News a Century Ago

Quack Medicine

IN a letter to the *Lancet* of December 23, 1837, "A Constant Reader" writes as follows: "There is a new system adopted by the puffers of nostrums, which, in the country, must operate very injuriously to the public. The other day travelling in the country, I met with a person who, in proof of the good performed by a quack medicine, pulled out of his pocket a handbill in which were stated the opinions of the leading journals of the metropolis, of course, highly laudatory of the nostrum in question. The plan formed to deceive the public is as follows:—An advertisement is sent to, perhaps, half a dozen of the leading journals, containing the puff intended to be republished in the handbills of the advertiser. As soon, however, as the advertisement has appeared, it is printed in the handbills, as if coming from the editor of the paper, in which it was inserted as an advertisement, and thus many ignorant persons really believe it to be the opinion of that journal."

Martin Van Marum (1750-1837)

ON December 26, 1837, the death of Martin Van Marum took place at Haarlem. He was born on March 20, 1750, at Groningen, and graduated there in medicine and philosophy. He afterwards practised medicine at Haarlem, but devoted much of his time to lecturing on physical subjects. He made a large number of experiments, especially in electricity, and devised a special form of the plate glass frictional electrical machine, which attracted a good deal of attention.

For more than forty years Van Marum was the secretary of the Dutch Society of Sciences at Haarlem. This Society had been founded in 1752 and was designed to include all branches of science and to further the search for everything necessary for the present and future prosperity of the country, both in its internal and external relations, in peace and war. Its motto was *Deo et Patriæ*. Its first secretary was the preacher Van der Aa, who was succeeded in 1794 by Van Marum, who held office until his death. It was probably through Van Marum that from about 1793 a more predominating place was given to physical science in its proceedings. In 1802 the Society published a volume of *Mechanical and Mathematical Transactions*, and in 1821-22 two volumes of *Philosophical Transactions*. Hooker, Lyell, Owen, Tyndall and Wheatstone were some of the foreign men of science elected to its membership.

The "Göttinger Sieben"

WHEN Queen Victoria came to the throne of England, the crown of Hanover passed to Ernst, Duke of Cumberland, the fifth son of George II. One of his first acts was to suspend the constitution of the State. This act led to a protest by seven professors of the University of Göttingen, who were dismissed then from their posts. They were afterwards referred to as the "Göttinger Sieben". They were Wilhelm Albrecht, professor of law, Friedrich Dahlmann, the historian, Heinrich Ewald, the theologian, Georg Gervinus, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, the philologists, and Wilhelm Ed. Weber (1804-1891), the physicist, who, with Gauss in 1833, had set up the first electric telegraph in Germany. As well as being dismissed from their posts, they were banished from the State, but not without meet-

ings of protests from other professors and the students. The streets of Göttingen had to be patrolled by soldiers, and coachmen were forbidden to supply students with carriages to enable them to accompany the professors to the borders.

Extracts from the German papers were given in *The Times* of December 27, 1837, and it is there stated that the students, not to be outdone, walked the sixteen miles to Witzenhausen where, as the exiled professors appeared with their families, they were given a rousing reception. Weber was afterwards professor of physics at Leipzig, but returned to Göttingen in 1849.

An Institution for the Advancement of Science

IN its column of "Weekly Gossip", the *Athenæum* of December 30, 1837, said: "Such of our readers as frequent Regent Street must have observed a large pile of building growing up, of late, on the west side, soon after passing Oxford Street, and communicating with one of the houses in Cavendish Square. This we are informed is about to be opened as an *Institution for the Advancement of the Arts and Practical Science* especially in connexion with Agriculture, Manufactures and other branches of Industry; combining in its results—say the projectors—many of the advantages of the *Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures* in Paris. The house in Cavendish Square will contain a Reading Room, Library and accommodation for the meeting of persons feeling an interest in promoting the objects of the Institution, or desirous of acquiring knowledge of such new discoveries as may, from time to time, be made public. To it will be attached the Gallery, now building, which is to be 127 feet by 40 feet wide and well adapted, we are informed, for the exhibition of novel and useful Models and apparatus illustrative of the various branches of Science and their application to the Arts; with a Laboratory, Experiment Rooms, a Theatre for Lectures, Consultation Rooms for the use of inventors, patentees, persons wishing to make experiments and persons seeking information on any point of science."

University Events

BIRMINGHAM.—The degree of D.Sc. in industrial fermentation has been conferred on J. L. Shimwell for numerous papers, published in the *Journal of the Institution of Brewing*, on bacteriological subjects associated with the brewing and fermentation industry.

CAMBRIDGE.—A grant of £100 a year for five years is recommended to be paid from the Chest to the fund for the upkeep of Wicken Fen.

The degree of Sc.D. has been conferred on W. G. Palmer of St. John's College.

LONDON.—The title of reader in civil engineering in the University has been conferred on Dr. A. L. Higgins in respect of the post held by him at Queen Mary College.

The title of emeritus professor of chemistry in the University has been conferred on Prof. F. G. Donnan on his retirement from the University chair of chemistry at University College.

The degree of D.Sc. in botany has been awarded to Miss Katherine Warington, of Rothamsted Experimental Station, and that of D.Sc. in physiology to Miss Katherine Tansley, of University College.