

University Events

EDINBURGH.—The University has awarded the Dewar research fellowship to Dr. C. A. Beevers, lecturer in physics at University College, Hull, for three years from April 1. This is the first award of the fellowship, which was recently established under a bequest of Lady Dewar, widow of Sir James Dewar, for research in physics and chemistry, and on this occasion it has been given for research in crystallography.

OXFORD.—W. H. Cashmore, J. S. Wilson, R. K. Macdowall, and W. J. West have been appointed research officers by the Committee for Rural Economy.

In Congregation on February 8 the University Chest was authorized to set aside out of the Nuffield Trust funds a sum not exceeding £99,944 for the erection and equipment of a laboratory of physical chemistry.

A grant was also made towards the expenses of the University Expeditions of this year to the Cayman Islands and to Greenland.

Science News a Century Ago

Meteorology in America

At a meeting of the Ashmolean Society at Oxford on February 12, 1838, a letter from Prof. Daubeny, dated at Philadelphia, was read. The letter contained a survey of the state of meteorological science in America and in it Daubeny stated that regular observations were made at Montreal by Mr. M'Cord, who had spared no expense in obtaining the best instruments, and that Mr. Webster, of Albany, from a table of mean temperatures of fifty-three places in the State of New York, had found the highest mean temperature in that State to be 51° and the lowest 43° F. Mr. Redfield, of New York, had advanced a theory that the prevailing storms on the Atlantic coasts have the same character as tornadoes and had prepared a chart to illustrate his views. The phenomena of these storms were explained by Mr. Espy, of Philadelphia, not by a gyratory motion, but by an upward current, which rushes in from all points of the compass towards a central point, where there is a rapid rise of the superficial strata of air into the higher regions of the atmosphere. Mr. Espy's views were stated at length and the letter also contained Daubeny's objections to them. The State of Pennsylvania, it was added, had allotted 4,000 dollars towards instruments for meteorological observations.

James Pollard Espy, who was born on May 9, 1786, and died on January 24, 1860, published his "Philosophy of Storms" in 1841. In 1843 he was appointed to the Washington Observatory, and while there he laid the foundation of the U.S. Weather Bureau.

A Letter from von Humboldt

On February 12, 1838, at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, a letter from Alexander von Humboldt, dated Berlin, January 10, 1838, was read. In the course of the letter, von Humboldt referred to Schmoburgk's travels in Guiana, the work of M. Federoff who had spent five years in northern

Asia, the trigonometrical survey between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and to the subject of magnetic observations. Of the observations being made at Berlin, he said, "As we make observations here, both with the needle of Gambey, furnished with microscopes, and with the new apparatus of Gauss, furnished with a mirror, we have an opportunity of convincing ourselves more and more of the greater perfection of the latter apparatus, which by degrees will be employed in all our great observatories.

"As I think that the subject is not without importance to seamen, I beg you to invite the influential members of your Society to be good enough to propagate Gauss's manner of observing in all new stations where intelligent people can be found. Points near the magnetic equator and those which are in high latitudes in the southern hemisphere . . . would be most desirable if they would observe at the same epochs indicated by M. Gauss."

Richard Owen receives the Wollaston Medal

At the anniversary meeting of the Geological Society held on February 16, 1838, at which Darwin was elected one of the secretaries, the president, the Rev. W. Whewell, in presenting the Wollaston Medal to Richard Owen, said: "Mr. Owen,—I have peculiar pleasure in presenting to you this medal, awarded to you by this Society, for your services to Fossil Zoology in general, and in particular for the description of the fossil mammalia collected by Mr. Darwin. I trust it will be a satisfaction to you to receive this our testimony of the success with which you have cultivated that great science of comparative zoology, to which you have devoted your powers. I trust it will add to your satisfaction, to consider that the subject which we more particularly wish to mark on this occasion—the Study of Fossil Zoology—is one to which the resources of your new science were applied, while the subject was yet new, by that great man—John Hunter—whose museum and whose reputation are so worthily consigned to your care. . . ."

Milne-Edwards on Annelidæ

"M. Milne-Edwards", said the *Athenæum* of February 17, 1838, "has been making some interesting and important observations on the circulating apparatus of the Annelidæ, which has been but little studied, excepting in the leech and earth-worm. He finds a great diversity among the different genera. For instance in the Terebellæ, the branchiæ act as an arterial heart and organ of respiration. Among the Arenicolæ, the vascular tufts on the back equally fulfil the double functions of heart and branchiæ and there are besides two ventricles, which by their pulsations, send the blood into the dorsal vessel. In the Eunice, the course of the blood is determined by the contraction of a series of vesicles, situated on each side of the ventral vessel, and sending out canals which go to the branchiæ. These vessels are consequently little pulmonary hearts; and as a pair of them exists in almost all the rings of the body, these singular Annelidæ often possess hundreds of hearts."

Henri Milne-Edwards (1800–1885) was elected to the Paris Academy of Sciences in 1838 and afterwards filled the chairs of entomology, zoology and physiology at the Jardin des Plantes.