

## Science News a Century Ago

### Ancient Carthage

THE *Gentleman's Magazine* of December 1838 contains the following information: "Sir Grenville Temple has employed himself for the last six months in making excavations on the classic soil of Carthage. On the site of the temple of Ganath, or Juno Coelestis, the great protecting divinity of Carthage, he found about seven hundred coins and various objects of glass and earthenware. But the most remarkable and least expected of his discoveries is that of a villa, situated on the seashore, and buried fifteen feet under the ground. Eight rooms have been completely cleared, and their size and decorations proved that the house belonged to a wealthy personage. The walls are painted, and the floors beautifully paved with mosaic, in the same manner as those at Pompeii and Herculaneum, representing a great variety of subjects, such as marine deities, both male and female, different species of sea-fish, marine plants, a vessel with female figures dancing on the deck, and surrounded by admiring warriors, other portions representing lions, horses, leopards, tigers, deer, zebras, bears, gazelles, hares, ducks, herons, etc. Ten human skeletons were found in the different chambers. In another house are mosaics, representing gladiators contending in the arena with wild beasts, and over each man is written his name. In another part are seen horse races and men breaking in young horses."

### The Asiatic Society

ON January 5, 1839, a communication by Lieut. James Raymond Wellsted (1805-42) of the Indian Navy was read relating to the identity of the Himyaritic writing and the dialect of Job with that still spoken by the inhabitants of Mahrah. In his letter, Wellsted described his discovery of inscriptions in the south of Arabia and gave his reasons for supposing they contained the ancient Himyaritic language. The great Himyaritic Empire is said by Arabian historians to have lasted about 2,000 years and to have extended its limits to India. Many persons had doubted the existence of this empire, but recent discoveries had shown that it had been the seat of large and populous cities. Wellsted also referred to the discoveries of Mr. Cruttenden, at Sana, similar to those which he himself made, and concluded with the hope that other officers of the Indian Navy would endeavour to add to our knowledge of those parts. He was able to state that the newly appointed governor of Bombay, Sir James Revett Carnac, would further their efforts.

### Flora of the London District

AT a meeting of the Botanical Society on January 4, 1839, the curator, Mr. Daniel Cooper, read a paper entitled "Remarks on the Dispersion of Plants in the Environs of London, and the Formation of Plans Exhibiting the Distribution of Species over Localities". The Metropolitan botanist, he said, can certainly boast of a flora, perhaps not to be equalled throughout the whole of England. Surrey is particularly rich in orchidaceous plants; twenty-six out of the thirty-six species are found dispersed within thirty miles of London. In Kent, it may be observed that the species are not quite as abundant, in the

ratio of twenty-one to thirty-six, including two species which had not, to Mr. Cooper's knowledge, been found in Surrey, at least within the range before specified by *Ophrys fucifera* and *Ophrys tetraphantos*. This tribe is not confined to the counties of Surrey and Kent in the London district as might be supposed; they occur also in Essex and Middlesex, but not so frequently.

### The Athenæum and Steam Navigation

THE *Athenæum*, in its first issue of January 1839, again dwelt at length on the subject of steam navigation, the article being prompted by the appearance of various publications relating to steam navigation to India and across the Atlantic. "With these, and many similar documents before us," the writer of the article said, "and standing as we do on the threshold of a new year, the prospects which open to us are of an extraordinary character, to which in the retrospect of the past, we can find no parallel. Steam navigation, hitherto in its infancy, is now rapidly advancing to gigantic maturity; and the future achievements of the infant Hercules may readily and safely be predicted from the growing feats of the athletic youth. It is manifest that this globe of ocean and earth is about to be enclosed in a continuous network of communications by steam. In this development Great Britain must necessarily for a long period of time be the principal instrument of extending and maintaining this gigantic system of communication. She alone possesses the requisite machinery, workshops, artificers, enterprise, public spirits and capital for so stupendous an undertaking."

Having thus approached his subject, the writer then went on in a well-informed manner to the design of ships, their size, their subdivision, materials for them and improvements in machinery. Large vessels were, he said, safer, surer and drier, while facility of construction, economy and strength made iron construction desirable.

## University Events

LONDON.—The title of reader in the University has been conferred on the following in respect of posts held at University College: Mr. C. R. Bailey (chemistry), Dr. R. O. Buchanan (economic geography).

The degree of D.Sc. has been conferred on Mr. T. G. Pearson, an internal student of the Imperial College (Royal College of Science).

The William Henry Hudson Memorial Prize has been awarded for 1938 to Miss Margaret E. Willy, of the New Cross Goldsmiths' College Centre.

The Graham scholarship in pathology has been awarded to Mr. R. M. Calder.

OXFORD.—In Congregation on December 10, the honorary degree of D.Sc. was conferred on Dr. Irving Langmuir, director of the Research Laboratories of the General Electric Company of the United States.

Dr. W. Hume-Rothery, formerly senior demy of Magdalen College, has been elected to a fellowship.