

## Science News a Century Ago

### The Royal Society

At a meeting of the Royal Society on March 7, 1839, William Hopkins read the third part of his paper "On the phenomena of Precession and Nutation, assuming the Interior of the Earth to be a Heterogeneous Fluid". The objects of researches of this kind, said the author, were not merely to determine the actual state of the globe, but also to trace its past history through the succession of ages, in which the matter composing it has probably passed gradually through all its stages between a simple elementary state to that in which it has become adapted for the habitation of man. In this point of view the problem was not without value, as demonstrating an important fact in the history of the earth, presuming its solidification to have begun at the surface—namely, the permanence of the inclination of its axis of rotation, from the epoch of the first formation of an exterior crust. This permanence had frequently been insisted on, and was highly important as connected with the author's speculations on the causes of that change of temperature which had probably taken place in the higher latitudes.

### A Royal Institution Conversazione

On March 8, 1839, a conversazione was held at the Royal Institution. In its report of the meeting the *Mechanics' Magazine* said: "Mr. Read exhibited what we think to be a very important application of his patent instrument, commonly called the 'stomach pump', namely to the restoration of suspended animation. Besides extracting noxious gases in other cases, and the naturally vitiated state of the air in the lungs of drowned persons, the apparatus is competent to keep up an artificial breathing, the supply of air being both warm and pure, and rendered more exciting if thought proper, by a mixture of oxygen with it. . . . The Royal Humane Society will assuredly hasten to add this to their other means of recovery. We would advise Mr. Read to furnish with the apparatus, air tight bags, which being supplied to the extremities, and the air exhausted by the same instrument, would tend to relieve congestion of blood in the head and other parts, and facilitate its circulation."

### Niepce, Daguerre and Talbot

In its column of weekly gossip, the *Athenæum* of March 9, 1839, said: "During the discussions which took place in Paris respecting the priority of the discovery of M. Daguerre and Mr. Talbot, the name of M. Niepce was incidentally mentioned as the person to whom the former was indebted for the first idea of fixing the images represented in a camera obscura. Subsequently M. Niepce's claim to honour has been more fully admitted; and this has been singularly confirmed by Mr. Bauer, in a letter published in the *Literary Gazette*. Mr. Bauer therein states that, in 1827, he became acquainted with M. Niepce, then on a visit to his brother at Kew; that M. Niepce made known to him, and others, that he had discovered a means of 'fixing permanently, the image of any object by the spontaneous action of light', and exhibited several specimens. That by the advice of Mr. Bauer, he, M. Niepce, drew up a memoir on the subject, dated 8th December, 1827, which he forwarded to the Royal Society, but which was subsequently returned, because it is contrary to

the rules of the Society, to read a paper referring to a process which is not disclosed. . . . Thus, then, the question of priority, as between England and France, is settled beyond all dispute: at the same time we must observe that the processes of M. Daguerre and Mr. Talbot are manifestly different."

Specimens of Niepce's work belonging to Mr. Bauer and to Mr. Cussels were submitted to the writer of this notice, who said that they were all on pewter, apparently covered with a very thin coating of transparent varnish, "but whether this varnish was applied before receiving the impressions, or subsequently, to fix them, is not obvious; we incline to the latter opinion".

## University Events

CAMBRIDGE.—The Rockefeller Foundation has allocated £650 as a grant to the Cavendish Laboratory for the purchase of instruments and for assistance in connexion with researches carried out by the Cavendish Professor on the application of X-ray technique to the study of crystals of biological importance.

F. J. Scrase, of Trinity Hall, has been approved for the degree of doctor of science.

At Trinity College, Dr. A. L. Bowley, emeritus professor of statistics in the University of London, and Sir Henry Dale, director of the National Institute for Medical Research, have been elected honorary fellows.

Dr. L. Wittgenstein, formerly fellow of Trinity College, has been appointed to succeed Prof. G. E. Moore, professor of philosophy, who will retire at the end of the current academical year.

LEEDS.—The following appointments have recently been made: W. G. France, demonstrator in anatomy; Eustace A. Horne, demonstrator in pathology and bacteriology; H. S. Shucksmith, surgical tutor; Donald A. McKenzie, lecturer in agricultural bacteriology.

LONDON.—Dr. P. H. Himsworth has been appointed, as from April 1, 1939, to the University chair of medicine tenable at University College Hospital Medical School. Since 1936, he has been deputy director of the Medical Unit at University College Hospital.

The title of professor of physics in the University has been conferred on Mr. Gilbert Stead, in respect of the post held by him at Guy's Hospital Medical School, and the title of reader in physics in the University on Mr. C. T. Archer, in respect of the post held by him at the Imperial College of Science and Technology.

The following doctorates have recently been conferred: D.Sc. on Miss Irma I. Andersson-Kottö, of the John Innes Horticultural Institution; F. M. Haines, of Queen Mary College; William Pugh, of King's College; Isaac Schapera, of the London School of Economics; R. B. Cattell and S. H. Straw.

OXFORD.—In Congregation on February 27, the honorary degree of D.Sc. was conferred on Don Pio del Rio Hortega, director of the National Institute of Cancer and of the Laboratory of Normal and Pathological Histology in Madrid.