

"As regards Kerguelen's Land, this large island (100 by 50 miles) was last visited in 1840, by the Antarctic Expedition under Sir James Ross, in mid-winter only, when it was found to contain a scanty flora of flowering plants, some of which belong to entirely new types, and an extraordinary profusion of marine animals and plants of the greatest interest, many of them being representatives of north-temperate and Arctic forms of life.

"H.M.S. *Challenger* will no doubt visit Kerguelen's Land, and collect largely; but it is evident that many years would be required to obtain even a fair representation of its marine products; and though we are not prepared to say that the scientific objects to be obtained by a naturalist's visit to Kerguelen's Land are of equal importance to those which Rodriguez will yield, we cannot but regard it as in every respect most desirable that the rare opportunity of sending a collector to Kerguelen's Land should not be lost."

I may further state as a matter of great scientific interest, that Rodriguez contains the remains of a gigantic species of land-tortoise allied to those still surviving in some other islands of the Mauritius group, and that the nearest allies of these are the gigantic tortoises of the Galapagos Islands in the opposite hemisphere of the globe, as one of our Fellows, Dr. Günther, has shown in a paper read last session to the Society. Very valuable collections of these fossils have been made by Mr. Newton, the Colonial Secretary of Mauritius, during a brief stay which he was enabled to make in Rodriguez; but the materials are far from sufficient for obtaining all the information we want.

In accordance with your Council's recommendation, the Treasury sanctioned the appointment of four naturalists—three to Rodriguez, and one to Kerguelen's Land. Those sent out to Rodriguez are:—Mr. I. B. Balfour, son of Prof. Balfour, of Edinburgh, F.R.S., who, besides being educated as a botanist, has worked as a field geologist in the Geological Survey of Scotland; he is charged with the duties of botanist and geologist; Mr. George Gulliver, son of one of our Fellows and a pupil of Prof. Rolleston, in Oxford, who goes out as naturalist; and Mr. H. H. Slater, who has had great experience as a cave explorer, and who will devote his attention especially to the collection of fossils.

The Kerguelen's Land duties are undertaken by the Rev. A. E. Eaton, M.A., a gentleman most favourably known as an entomologist, and who had made very important collections in Spitzbergen, which he visited for the purpose of studying its fauna and flora. These gentlemen had, by the last accounts, all proceeded to their destinations.

(To be continued.)

FRENCH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.—ANNIVERSARY MEETING

THIS Anniversary took place on the 28th December, the president being M. Faye, who delivered an able address, giving some interesting details as to the history of the prizes offered for competition by the Academy.

One of the first ever offered was a sum of 4,000*l.* given by Philippe d'Orleans, then Regent of France, in 1716, to be awarded to the person or persons who should invent a method of determining longitude at sea. This handsome sum was not awarded to anyone up to 1793, when the Academy was suppressed, M. de Choiseul, French Ambassador to England, having made fruitless exertions on behalf of Harrison, the well-known chronometer maker, in 1763.

A circumstance connected with these old prizes is worth noting. La Condamine, about 100 years ago, offered a prize for an essay on the question "why so many differences of colour were noted between the male and female livery in quadrupeds as well as in birds." The question being deemed useless, the money was not accepted by the Academy.

In the last century almost all the prizes were won by Euler and Bernouilly, but now scarcely any of the prizes, amounting to 160*l.*, are awarded; sometimes nobody competes for them.

Although the distribution this year is both for 1872 and 1873, only two of the competitive prizes have been taken, one for 1873 by M. Mascart, professor in the Collège de France, for a paper on the modification which the light of the sun undergoes in consequence of the motion either of the sun or of the earth. M. Mascart failed to observe any modification, but the prize was given to him owing to the care and ingenuity displayed in his experiments. One prize was also won by M. Balbrain for a

paper on the reproduction of animals that present parthenogenetic phenomena.

The proceeds of the 4,000*l.* offered by M. Breaut to the person who should discover a cure for the cholera was divided between several partly successful essayists for 1872 and 1873, but it is not likely that the sum itself will ever be parted with by the Academy.

The prizes offered for general excellence or voluntary work on a certain subject have been a great deal more fortunate, so that the method adopted by the Royal Society promises better results than the old academical competitive system, even in Paris. The Plumly prize of 120*l.* for the best paper on the improvement of steam navigation was gained for 1872 by M. Zaurines, who has carefully investigated propulsion by the Archimedean screw; in 1873 by M. Bertin, for a paper on the best method of ventilating steamers.

The Lalande prize in astronomy has been gained for 1872 by the brothers Henry for the discovery of a number of small planets at the Paris Observatory, and in 1873 by M. Coggia, of the Observatory of Marseilles, for his discoveries among comets.

The Poncelet prize has been given for 1872 to M. Mannheim for the general excellence of his geometrical disquisitions, and in 1873 to Sir W. Thomson for his magnificent works on the mathematical theory of electricity and magnetism.

The Godard prize for 1872 has been awarded to Dr. Pettigrew for his work "On the Muscular Arrangements of the Bladder and Prostate, and the manner in which the Ureters and Urethra are closed."

The aggregate sum to be awarded yearly, exclusive of the Breaut prize, is 4,400*l.*, and the number of prizes nineteen, only a few being for subjects specially proposed by the Academy. The competition is open to all nations. The names of competitors must be placed in sealed envelopes, which are opened only in the case of those who succeed; but, except in the case of prizes given for general excellence, papers must be written either in Latin or in French.

SCIENTIFIC SERIALS

Jahrbuch der k.k. geologischen Reichsanstalt. Band xxiv. Nos. 1 and 2.—The first article in No. 1 is by Dr. A. Redtenbacher, and treats of the stratigraphical relations of the mesozoic formations as developed in the district of Gams, near Hiefau. The second paper, by Dr. C. Doelter, gives some account of the Siebenbürgischen metalliferous mountains. The district described lies south of the river Arranyos, between Offenbánya and Bistria, as far as the Maros. The formations developed in this district consist of (1) crystalline, metamorphic, and eruptive rocks (gneiss, crystalline limestone, granite, diorite, syenite); (2) jurassic and cretaceous (limestone, melaphyre and augite porphyry, sandstone, chalk, &c.); (3) Tertiary (comprising besides various fossiliferous deposits, such igneous rocks as hornblende-andesite, augite-andesite, basalt); (4) alluvium. A sketch-map accompanies Dr. Doelter's communication.—Herr R. Hörnös contributes a paper entitled "Tertiary Studies," in which he gives an account of the mollusca met with in various Tertiary deposits (as at Kischeneff, Jenikale, &c.) A number of the species described are new to science. Four excellent plates illustrate the paper.—Dr. E. Mojsisovics, whose contributions to the *Jahrbuch* are both frequent and valuable, gives us a long paper on the Triassic period in the East Alps. He discusses the distribution of the Triassic fauna, and shows that the formation itself may be divided into zones, each characterised by certain well-marked species; further, he describes at length the nature of the deposits, and points out that the trias is characterised throughout by the constant presence of poorly fossiliferous limestone and dolomite and richly fossiliferous marl and calcareous marl.—The only geological paper in No. 2 is one by Dr. Guido Stache, On the palæozoic regions of the East Alps. The author describes in considerable detail the structure of the rock-masses forming the Alpine lands of Austria, and gives a coloured geological map of the regions described, and two plates of horizontal sections.—Amongst the mineralogical papers accompanying these numbers of the *Jahrbuch* may be noted one by Dr. Doelter, On the trachyte of the Siebenbürgischen metalliferous mountains, in which a number of analyses are given.—Herr Kalkowsky furnishes an account of the microscopy of the felsite and pechstein of Saxony.—A new mineral (Ludwigite) from Banat is described by T. Herak; and a