

journey, in which alone is there any original information, occupying the second place. From Aden Mr. Harris started inland and crossed the Turkish frontier under the pretence of being a Greek shopkeeper from Port Said. In this way he obtained access to the disaffected province of Yemen during the progress of a rebellion, reached Sanaa, and was naturally imprisoned by the Turkish officials there, who refused to recognise his English passport. The author finds fault with the Foreign Office for not coming to his rescue, apparently forgetful that he wilfully concealed his nationality at the outset, and so gave rise to suspicion, and forfeited any privileges to which it might entitle him. From Sanaa he was sent under escort to Hodeida. The illustrations are interesting as types of the scenery and people of the Yemen, but the book has no other claim to scientific notice.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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The Directorship of the British Institute of Preventive Medicine.

WE observe in your issue of the 18th inst. a letter, signed by Prof. Roy, respecting the appointment of a "Director" to the Institute of Preventive Medicine, and purporting to recount what occurred at the meetings of the Council.

As Prof. Roy has misstated the principal facts, and has withheld others which are fatal to his allegations, it is possible that some of your readers may be misled, and it is therefore advisable that the real state of the matter should be published.

(1) The present appointment being one of a purely temporary nature (for three years only) and at a nominal salary, is not, as Prof. Roy implies, equal to that of Dr. Koch, neither is it to that of M. Pasteur, who, by the way, is not, as Prof. Roy implies, the Director of the Pasteur Institute.

(2) The qualifications necessary for the office were fully considered by the Council, and by committees of the Council, and consequently Prof. Roy's statements to the contrary are not correct.

(3) Prof. Roy's statement that he initiated the idea of the Institute is not according to the fact. He was entrusted with moving the resolution proposing the establishment, at the meeting where the matter was first publicly discussed, but the founding of the Institute had been in the minds of the members of the Mansion House Committee and discussed among them long before.

(4) Prof. Roy implies that he resigned his position as secretary to the Council (*sic*) as a kind of protest against the latter's mode of transacting business.

This statement is incorrect. In the first place, Prof. Roy was one of the secretaries to the Executive Committee, and not to the Council. In the second place, Prof. Roy resigned that position without making any protest whatever to the committee, by whom his resignation was at once and unconditionally accepted.

(5) The subject of the temporary directorship was discussed by "gentlemen who are" or have been "directors of laboratories." Prof. Roy implies it was not so discussed by experts. The error of this allegation is probably due to the fact that he was absent from the Council meeting at which the question was first brought up, and that he was not a member of any committee. It may be noted that Prof. Roy complains of non-attendances. On this point his statement may at once be conceded so far as he personally is concerned, since in 1893 he attended but three meetings.

(6) The question of appointment of a temporary Director was stated on December 13 to be urgent, and the urgency was admitted by the whole Council with the exception of Prof. Roy. Prof. Roy tells your readers that the statement "carried no weight with him." Possibly this may have been because he was absent from the previous Council

meeting when the point of urgency was fully discussed; but such ignorance, even if admitted to be an excuse, does not account for Prof. Roy now withholding the fact that when he was present on the 13th ult. the reason of the urgency was fully communicated to him. Also, it is not right for him to withhold, as he does, the fact that the acceptance of the report of the sub-committee, which was wholly conditioned by that urgency, was agreed to by the Council *nem. con.*

(7) Prof. Roy speaks as though the Council strongly objected to the resolutions laid before it. He ignores the fact that on the 13th it was but two members, including himself, and on the 19th only himself, who so objected.

(8) Prof. Roy suppresses the fact that a special meeting of the Council was held on December 19 to re-examine the whole question, and to confirm or reject the minutes of the meeting of December 13, and that those minutes were circulated to every member of the Council, and that the meetings of the 13th and 19th were well attended. He omits to mention that he circulated beforehand, and produced at the meeting on the 19th, a document which he termed a "protest," and that, as it contained offensive statements plainly contrary to fact, the Council declined to proceed with the business of the meeting until Prof. Roy withdrew his "protest" unconditionally. He also suppresses the fact that he did so, and that this preliminary having been executed, the minutes of December 13 were then put and confirmed *nem. con.*

If any of your readers, after this historical statement, consider that Prof. Roy's letter is justified in any sense, further information can be supplied.

In conclusion, it may perhaps be interesting to note the names of those present on December 19. These were, for the appointment of the temporary Director—Sir Joseph Lister (chairman), Sir Henry Roscoe, Sir Joseph Fayrer, Prof. Burdon Sanderson, Prof. Michael Foster, Prof. Victor Horsley, Mr. Watson Cheyne; while there was opposed to the appointment—Prof. Roy.

J. FAYRER,

VICTOR HORSLEY,

Mover and seconder of the motion for confirmation of the minutes of December 13.

The Origin of Rock Basins.

IN my previous letter I confined myself to one aspect of the controversy relative to the origin of rock basins now occupied by lakes, as all the other arguments adduced by Dr. Wallace—with one exception, of which more hereafter—have already been answered, and the case on either side so fully presented that each one may draw his own conclusions as to which is right. The particular confusion of argument I referred to has not been so fully dealt with, and Dr. Wallace's letter shows that it was one which required to be met, for the heading of his letter itself shows that he has not fully appreciated the particular point at issue, which is the cause of origin of rock basins irrespective of whether they are or have ever been occupied by lakes. Leaving out of question the opinions of other opponents of the glacial erosion theory of the origin of lakes, as this would introduce too large a subject for the correspondence columns of NATURE, and confining myself to the defence of the views put forth in my former letter, I may point out that the preglacial origin of rock basins by deformation is by no means the strongest form of the alternative explanation; on the contrary, it appears to me to be subject to nearly as many objections as the hypothesis of glacial erosion of rock basins. If a rock basin is produced by deformation in a region where the valleys are not filled by glaciers, the ordinary action of the streams will usually be able to prevent a lake from being produced by the erosion of the barrier, the filling up of the hollow, or both combined. When, however, a rock basin is formed by differential movements in a glacier filled valley, it would be filled with ice, and so protected from sedimentation, and on the retreat of the glacier would at first be filled with water, and only gradually filled with solid matter, while the stream, having deposited its solid burden in the lake, would be unable to exert any erosive action on the barrier. From this it appears that there is a probability that rock basins formed beneath the glaciers during their extension in the glacial period should remain to the present day as lakes only partially filled up by solid *débris*.

Seeing then that there is an inherent probability that rock basins formed in non-glaciated regions would never become