

terises the Bennettiteæ, as a family perfectly distinct from the Cycadææ, though probably, as Count Solms-Laubach suggests, having a common origin with them at some remote period. The Bennettiteæ, while approaching Angiosperms in the complexity of their fruit, retain a filicinean character in their ramenta, which are quite like those of ferns, and different from any other form of hair found in recent Cycadææ. Probably the bennettitean and cycadean series diverged from each other at a point not far removed from the filicinean stock common to both.

I hope that the hasty sketch which I have attempted of some of the indications of descent afforded by modern work on fossil plants may have served to illustrate the importance of the questions involved and to bring home to botanists the fact that phylogenetic problems can no longer be adequately dealt with without taking into account the historical evidence which the rocks afford us.

Before leaving this subject I desire to express the great regret which all botanists must feel at the recent loss of one of the few men in England who have carried on original work in fossil botany. At the last meeting of the Association we had to lament the death, at a ripe old age, of a great leader in this branch of science, Prof. W. C. Williamson. Only a few weeks ago we heard of the premature decease of Thomas Hick, for many years his demonstrator and colleague. Mr. Hick profited by his association with his distinguished chief, and made many valuable original contributions to palæobotany (not to mention other parts of botanical science), among which I may especially recall his work, in conjunction with Mr. Cash, on *Astromyelon* (now known to be the root of Calamites), on the leaves and on the primary structure of the stem in Calamites, on the structure of *Calomostachys*, on the root of *Lyginodendron*, and on a new fossil probably allied to *Stigmaria*. His loss will leave a gap in the too thin ranks of fossil-botanists; but we may hope that the subject, now that its importance is beginning to be appreciated, will be taken up by a new generation of enthusiastic investigators.

CONCLUSION.

To my mind there is a wonderful fascination in the records of the far-distant past in which our own origin, like that of our distant cousins the plants, lies hidden. If any fact is brought home to us by the investigations of modern biology, it is the conviction that all life is one: that, as Nägeli said, the distance from man to the lowest bacterium is less than the distance from the lowest bacterium to non-living matter.

In all studies which bear on the origin and past history of living things there is an element of human interest—

“ Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither.”

The problems of descent, though strictly speaking they may often prove insoluble, will never lose their attraction for the scientifically guided imagination.

THE CONWAY EXPEDITION TO SPITZBERGEN.

THE *Times* of September 18 published an account of a conversation which Mr. Trevor-Battye, on his return from his recent journey in Spitzbergen, had with a representative of Reuter's Agency. To this report we are indebted for the following particulars. As will be remembered, Mr. Trevor-Battye was a member of Sir Martin Conway's expedition (an account of the doings of a section of which appeared in *NATURE* of September 10, from the pen of Dr. J. W. Gregory), and, as arranged, left Sir Martin Conway, Dr. Gregory, and Mr. Garwood, in company with Mr. Conway, the artist, and Pedersen, of Tromsø, near Advent Bay for the purpose of exploring some of the northern parts of the island. The first object was to explore Dickson Bay, the most northerly bay in Ice Fjord, the northern part of which had never been mapped. In this work the explorers seem to have met with very considerable difficulties from flowing ice and the remains of the old winter pack. However, they landed at a place on the western shore, and spent the night. In the morning, the ice having opened a little, Mr. Trevor-Battye and Pedersen crossed to the other side, being anxious to find out something of the character of the country which separates Ice Fjord from

the sea lying to the north. At the north end they found the tide was out, and great stretches of mud of a very tenacious character were to be seen. In the distance, running north-west, appeared what seemed to be a valley; but, at a nearer view, it proved not to be a valley at all, but an enormous glacier, the front of which was masked by an immense and intricate moraine. The glacier, in striking contrast to the majority of glaciers, is a retreating one, and is slowly dying back. On reaching it, the explorers found it a mile and a half wide, and many miles in length. Pedersen, being anxious about his boat, returned to her at this stage, and Mr. Trevor-Battye went on alone, and presently climbed the snout of a rounded glacier, by which he hoped to be able to effect a crossing. It was, however, badly crevassed, the crevasses becoming wider and more formidable at every step. In his own words: “I had not expected to find ice, and so was not prepared, not even having a stick or a gun with me. I wanted to push on, however, although aware of the fact that the undertaking was rash, and one which, under the circumstances, no Alpine guide would have attempted. I went some distance further, but, sinking to my knees on a snow-bridge half-spanning a crevasse, I had to reach the other side by flinging myself forward. Later, while standing at the edge of another crevasse, a large body of solid ice, which was jammed between its walls, fell with a roar as I was going to walk across it. A little ahead I could see the col, from which I knew I should have sight of the sea; but I found it impossible to proceed without proper ice tools, for the crevasses between me and that point were masked by deep snow, and I felt any further attempts to be quite unjustifiable. I had now reached a height of 1800 feet—not of mountain, but a gradual rise of ice-river from the sea. The return journey I found more difficult, as the crevasses had to be met down hill, and a slip upon their rounded edges would have been fatal. Finally, I rejoined Pedersen after a walk of twenty-two hours. We then returned to Cape Warn, and explored the western bay of Ice Fjord. According to Nordenskiöld's map, on which our Admiralty chart is based, a large island occupies the centre of this bay; but, after cruising about for two days, we found to our surprise that it no longer existed as an island. The glacier—which, by the way, we named ‘Splendid Glacier’—had encroached to such an extent, and so rapidly, that it had entirely filled up one neck of the bay, and had also covered two-thirds of the island. In a few years' time the head of the bay will be completely obliterated.”

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

DR. CARL VON KUPFFER, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Munich, has been elected Rector of that University for the coming year.

MR. J. AIREY, of the Leeds Organised Science School, has been appointed science master of the Rhondda Intermediate School at Porth.

MR. F. T. HOWARD, Professor of Geology in Cardiff University College, has been appointed one of her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

MR. H. J. MACKINDER will deliver, at Gresham College, under the auspices of the University Extension Society, a course of twenty-five lectures on “The Geography of Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa,” beginning on October 5, at six o'clock.

DR. E. SYMES THOMPSON, Gresham Professor of Medicine, will deliver lectures on “Vaccination,” on October 6 and 7, and on “The New Photography,” on October 8 and 9. The lectures, for which no charge for admission is made, will be given at six o'clock each evening in Gresham College, Basinghall Street, E. C.

THE Councils of University College and of King's College, London, have, in conjunction with the Technical Education Board of the London County Council, arranged a number of courses to be held in the evenings for those students who are engaged in the day-time. The courses are to be of the same standard as the day classes, and admission will be confined to students who have already made some advance in the knowledge of the subjects. At University College there will be lectures on mechanical engineering, by Prof. Hudson Beare, commencing October 12; electrical engineering, by Prof. Fleming, commencing October 13; and practical chemistry, by Mr. C. F. Cross, commencing November 1. At King's College the special evening classes for advanced students are: Civil