

BARON SIR FERDINAND VON MUELLER.

NEWS of the death of this distinguished botanist and geographer reached London on the 10th inst., causing some surprise, as it was not known here that his health was failing. Born at Rostock in 1825, and educated at Kiel, he emigrated to Australia in 1847, in consequence of hereditary symptoms of phthisis; having previously lost his parents. Mueller belonged to the school of botanists, now fast diminishing in numbers, who began their studies in the field instead of in the laboratory. Before leaving Europe, he devoted much time between 1840 and 1847 to the investigation of the flora of Schleswig-Holstein. On his arrival in Australia, he took service as a druggist's assistant in Adelaide—a post he seems to have held for a brief period, as he was soon engaged in exploring South Australia. From 1848 to 1852 he travelled at his own expense. At this date he was appointed, by Governor La Trobe, to the newly-created post of Government botanist, and soon visited the previously unexplored Australian Alps. About this period he entered into correspondence with the late Sir William Hooker, which led to the publication of the results of his earlier journeys in Hooker's *Kew Journal of Botany*, beginning with the fifth volume. In 1854 the Victorian Institute was founded¹—the first institution of its kind, I believe, in Australia proper, though Tasmania had its Royal Society some three years earlier; and Mueller was one of the first and most prolific contributors to its *Transactions*. It was here that he published the new plants collected in the Australian Alps.

In 1855-56 Mueller was attached as botanist to Gregory's expedition across North Australia, from the Victoria River to the Albert River. In 1857 he was appointed Director of the Melbourne Botanic Garden; but in 1873 he was superseded, owing to his too rigidly scientific management, though he still retained charge of the herbarium and library. Great as were his exertions and his enthusiasm on the introduction and cultivation of useful and ornamental plants, he failed from a practical standpoint. His work on "Select Extratropical Plants eligible for Industrial Culture," &c., was an extraordinary success; yet not on account of its practical value, for it has none, but as a work of general reference it is very useful. Nine editions have appeared, including an American, a French, and a German edition.

During the forty-nine years of his Australian life, Mueller was such an unceasing and copious writer, that it is impossible to do more than glance at some of his more important publications. It was from the first his ambition to write a "Flora" of the entire country, and his almost innumerable papers were written with that view; but when it came to the point, the task, for various reasons, was confided to the late George Bentham, and Mueller most cordially co-operated with him by sending his collections and notes to Kew. Of that I can speak with some authority, having acted a very humble, though congenial, part in connection with the earlier volumes of the classical "Flora Australiensis." Mueller, however, found enough to do in publishing the thousands of novelties collected by himself, and by others under his direction. His "Fragmenta Phytographiæ Australiæ" is the chief, but by no means the sole repertorium of his descriptions. Prominent among his more utilitarian works are the illustrated monographs of the genera *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia*. His "Census of Australian Plants," so carefully compiled with regard to dates, references and authorities, is exceedingly useful for purposes of comparison with the floras of other countries, and has been extensively used by the writer and others. But Mueller was much more than a botanist and geographer; he was always a promoter, and often the

originator, of movements for the scientific, social, and material welfare of the country he had made his home. He was in turn President of the Philosophical Institute, of the Geographical Society (Victorian branch), of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science, and various other bodies and societies. He has also the reputation of having been a most devout and philanthropic person. And, in spite of his not being a practical horticulturist, he did more probably than any other person to promote the commercial—that is to say, the useful—development of cultural industries in Australia, and more than any other person in the diffusion of useful Australian plants in other parts of the world. He had probably a wider correspondence than any living botanist, and few are the establishments that have not been in some way benefited by him. The value of his work consists largely in the fact that he did exactly the kind of work that was required in a young country for its material as well as its moral development. It is true that his work exhibits more industry than genius; but, after all, what he undertook gave little scope for the latter quality. There was, however, a weak side in his character, which it would be affectation to pass over entirely, though one would say as little about it as possible. He had an inordinate craving for titles, distinctions, and admiration. This led him to publish, in all sorts of places and languages, what it would have been much better to have kept together, and to indulge in vagaries in botanical nomenclature which are simply deplorable and damaging to his character as a sincere servant of science. Nevertheless, the country to which he devoted nearly half a century of active life was proud of him, and justly so, and willingly honoured him during his lifetime, and will doubtless long cherish his memory.

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NOTES.

OUR American contemporary, *Science*, suggests the formation of an International Association for the Advancement of Science, recent events having shown that members of the various national Associations regard co-operation in a cordial manner. The British Association meets in Toronto next year, and the American Association, after meeting at Detroit, on the Canadian frontier, will adjourn to Toronto to welcome our Association to the American continent. Another instance of community of feeling is afforded by the decision of the British Association to meet at Dover in 1899, in order to promote an interchange of visits between its members and those of the French Association, which will meet at Boulogne in the same year. These signs of fellowship indicate that the time has come when an international congress for the advancement of science may be profitably considered. Among the many subjects which would benefit by international co-operation are bibliography, nomenclature, definition of units, exploration, and science teaching. The amalgamation would also impress the collective weight of science upon the outside world, and would thus be able to claim a more adequate support and recognition of scientific progress. The proposal of our contemporary is that the first meeting of an international congress of this character should take place in Paris in the first year of the twentieth century. In considering the question of the amalgamation of Associations for the Advancement of Science, it must be remembered that great international congresses are often too unwieldy to be satisfactorily managed, and that the confusion of tongues at such gatherings is a constant factor working against success.

SCIENCE has just lost two of its foremost workers. We refer to Dr. Henry Trimen, F.R.S., late Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Ceylon, who died at Peradeniya on Sunday

¹ Subsequently the Philosophical Institute, and then the Royal Society.