

two true Leonids and one slow, "stray," spent-looking shooting-star—in the strong moonlight, I should say that had the shower been in any force I should have seen more, and that therefore it must be taken to have been weak and to have gone past us inside the earth's orbit, as it did, presumably, in the past year or two. The radiant point was not determined, but it seemed to be in the usual position."

ing Fellows were elected the first members of the council of the Academy:—Sir W. R. Anson, the Right Hon. James Bryce, Prof. I. Bywater, Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids, the Rev. Prof. S. R. Driver, the Rev. Principal Fairbairn, Sir C. P. Ilbert, K.C.S.I., Sir R. C. Jebb, the Rev. Prof. J. E. B. Mayor, Dr. J. A. H. Murray, Prof.

Date, 1902.	Duration of watch (Local Time*);				Number of		Remarks. (* Local Times about 25m. slow on Greenwich Time.)
	From h. m.		To h. m.		Leonids	Other meteors.	
November 13 ...	12	0	1	0	0	0	Clear horizon-belt in E. and S.; cloudy afterwards.
November 14 ...	...		...	...	...	...	Cloudy throughout.
November 15 ...	12	0	2	0	0	1	Clear; moonlight } (2nd magnitude meteor; very slow.
„ 15 ...	3	0	4	0	0	0	
„ 15 ...	6	0	7	0	1	0	
November 16 ...	12	0	5	30	...	...	Cloudy.
„ 16 ...	5	45	6	15	0	0	Clear space around Leo.
November 17 ...	...		...	...	...	...	Cloudy throughout.
November 18 ...	12	0	4	0	0	0	Clear.
„ 18 ...	4	0	5	0	1	0	„
„ 18 ...	5	0	6	0	...	...	No watch kept.
November 19 ...	5	0	6	0	0	0	Clear.
Totals ...	...		...	2	1		

To complete the partial record which these notes supply of the shower's apparent strength this year, at somewhat near its time of greatest brightness, it may be hoped that more favourably observed particulars of the appearance of the Leonids may reach us yet from foreign places, and it might earnestly be wished, as well, that notes of the number of shooting-stars observed may have been kept at any distant station on the globe where possibly some sensible ramification and dense clustering of cometary dust along the wake of the departing meteor-stream may have happened to produce a fairly bright and numerous display of what it now appears probable may have to be known for some time to come, if not perhaps for all coming time, as the traditionally splendid celestial spectacle of the November Leonids.

A. S. HERSCHEL.

Observatory House, Slough, November 26.

**Vitality and Low Temperatures.**

THE remarkable results of the experiments of Prof. Macfadyen and others, on the effects of low temperatures on organic life, render it highly desirable to ascertain how long vitality can be retained under such conditions, and with liquid air now available it becomes possible to extend the inquiry for an indefinite number of years—a generation if necessary.

The fact that organisms, after having been maintained for six months at temperatures far below those at which vital activities are possible, have retained their vitality practically unimpaired, profoundly modifies the conception hitherto attached to the word "life," and if it can be shown that vitality can survive for a protracted period in these circumstances, the conclusion that it is a molecular function seems inevitable.

If such an experimental result were obtained, it would strengthen the possibility of Lord Kelvin's speculation that the origin of life on the earth may have been ultra-terrestrial, and this implies that the ultimate source would probably have to be looked for under conditions not common to, possibly transcending, our experience.

W. J. CALDER.

Stellenbosch, South Africa.

**THE BRITISH ACADEMY.**

AT a general meeting of the Fellows of the British Academy, held on November 19, the Right Hon. Lord Reay, G.C.S.I., president of the Institute of International Law and president of the Royal Asiatic Society, was elected first president of the Academy.

At the same meeting, the *Times* announces, the follow-

H. F. Pelham, the Rev. Prof. W. W. Skeat, Sir E. Maunde Thompson, K.C.B., Dr. A. W. Ward, Prof. James Ward.

At a meeting of the council, held on November 26, Mr. I. Gollancz, Fellow of the Academy, University lecturer in English at Cambridge, was appointed secretary of the Academy.

In the report of the anniversary meeting of the Royal Society, printed elsewhere in this issue, the position taken by the Royal Society in connection with the constitution of the British Academy is described. By its action, the Society limits its sphere of activity to that of the experimental sciences, and dissociates itself from the scientific study of archaeology, philology, philosophy, political economy and similar branches of knowledge. Its scope is thus to be that of the Paris Académie des Sciences—one of the five academies which constitute the Institute of France—and the British Academy will correspond very nearly to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques. Many men of science regret that the Royal Society has thus ceased to represent the totality of British scientific work, as it formerly did, and has limited its scope to certain branches.

**ANOTHER HODGKINS GOLD MEDAL AWARDED.**

IN March last, Dr. S. P. Langley, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, appointed a committee to consider whether any discovery had been made since the award of the first Hodgkins gold medal in 1899, under the general terms of the gift, "the increase and diffusion of more exact knowledge in regard to the nature and properties of atmospheric air in connection with the welfare of man," which would render it proper that such a medal should be again awarded. This committee consisted of the following distinguished men of science:—Mr. Richard Rathbun, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, chairman; Dr. A. Graham Bell, for electricity; Dr. Ira Remsen, for chemistry; Dr. Charles D. Walcott, for geology; Prof. E. C. Pickering, for astronomy; Dr. Theodore N. Gill, for biology; Prof.