

JAMES WIMSHURST, F.R.S.

WE regret to have to announce the death of Mr. James Wimshurst, F.R.S., which occurred at his residence on Saturday, January 3. Mr. Wimshurst was born in London in 1832 and was therefore in his seventy-first year. He was for a long time a surveyor with Lloyds', both in London and in Liverpool, finally becoming principal shipwright surveyor to the Board of Trade, which appointment he held until a few years ago, when he retired under the age rule.

Mr. Wimshurst was devoted to scientific pursuits, in which he spent the greater part of his spare time. At his private house at Clapham, he had a laboratory and workshop, which he had himself fitted up with the assistance of his two sons. It was here that he worked out the new designs in influence machines which have made his name familiar to every student of science. His attention was first turned to this subject about 1881, when he constructed a machine of the Holtz pattern, but embodying several important improvements. After about a year's work, he designed an influence machine with oppositely rotating glass discs bearing metal sectors on their outer faces, which he called a "duplex" machine, but which has been universally known since as "Wimshurst's machine." For many years, he continued perfecting this pattern of electrostatic generator, building larger and more efficient machines. These machines have displaced all other generators of static electricity on account of their possessing the property of being self-exciting under any atmospheric conditions; they are very largely used for experimental, X-ray and electromedical works.

In 1890, Mr. Wimshurst designed a machine capable of producing rapidly alternating charges of electricity. In the same year, he was elected a member of the council of the Physical Society. In 1898, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society; he was in addition a member of many other scientific societies, including the Institution of Electrical Engineers and the Röntgen Society; he was also a member of the board of managers of the Royal Institution.

All Mr. Wimshurst's scientific research was done for pure love of the work, and he persistently refused to accept any pecuniary benefit from it. His advice and assistance were always at the service of those interested, and his long experience with influence machines made his advice invaluable and in frequent requisition.

NOTES.

WE are authorised by Prof. J. J. Thomson to contradict the announcement that he has accepted the chair of physics in Columbia University, U.S.A.

THE Geological Society of London will this year award its medals and prize funds as follows:—Wollaston medal to Prof. Heinrich Rosenbusch, of Heidelberg, Murchison medal to Dr. C. Calloway, Lyell medal to Mr. F. W. Rudler, Bigsby medal to Dr. H. M. Ami, of Ottawa, Prestwich medal to the Right Hon. Lord Avebury, Wollaston fund to Mr. L. L. Belinfante, Murchison fund to Mrs. Gray, and Lyell fund to Mr. George Edward Dibley and Mr. S. S. Buckman.

IN a letter to Wednesday's *Times*, Sir Norman Lockyer states that several months ago he discussed with Mr. Shaw, the secretary of the Meteorological Council, the desirability of obtaining information regarding barometric pressures from ships crossing the Atlantic, by utilising wireless telegraphy. It now seems probable that this idea will soon be practically realised, for in reply to an ethergram from Mr. Marconi, Sir Norman Lockyer asked for help in this matter, and on January 13 received the following message:—"By wireless telegraphy.—

Thanks for suggestion, hope to be able to do so soon, big westerly gale here Monday.—MARCONI." Sir Norman remarks that all friends of Science will be grateful to Mr. Marconi for such generous and invaluable assistance which will undoubtedly be of enormous advantage to British meteorology.

THE article by Dr. J. C. McVail in another part of this issue (p. 254) directs attention to the present unsatisfactory position of the law relating to vaccination in England, and the need for educating and organising public opinion in support of a new Vaccination Act. At the end of the present year, the Vaccination Act of 1898 will have run its experimental course of five years, and the opportunity should then be taken to ensure the introduction of a new measure based upon scientific principles. It is to render assistance in this direction that the Imperial Vaccination League has been formed. A deputation of the League is to wait upon the President of the Local Government Board this week, and will place before him the principal points upon which legislation is needed in connection with vaccination, with particular reference to revaccination. Three sub-committees appointed recently by the League have reported upon the degree of immunity given by primary vaccination, the need for revaccination at the age of twelve years, the transfer of vaccination administration from Boards of Guardians to some authority charged with public health functions, and the preparation and supply of calf lymph. The deputation which will wait upon Mr. Long will doubtless refer to the conclusions of the sub-committees and will urge emphatically that legislation should tend in the direction suggested by them.

WE regret to announce the death of the Rev. Dr. H. W. Watson, F.R.S., author of standard works on mathematical and physical subjects, and of well-known treatises on the kinetic theory of gases.

WE notice with regret the announcement of the death of Dr. H. E. Schunck, F.R.S., distinguished by his researches in connection with the chemistry of colouring matters.

THE death is announced of M. Albert Hénoque, vice-president of the Paris Biological Society and assistant director of the laboratory of biological physics in the Collège de France. M. Hénoque was known for his work in connection with the spectroscopic examination of blood.

THE King of Sweden and Norway has, *La Nature* reports, conferred the Norwegian medal Til Beleening (Pour le mérite) upon M. Berthelot in recognition of the work of the distinguished French chemist.

A REUTER telegram from Ashkabad states that a fresh earthquake occurred at Andijan at 11 a.m. on January 7. The shock was of a particularly violent character.

THE Royal Statistical Society has awarded a Guy medal in silver to Mr. R. H. Hooker, for his paper on the suspension of the Berlin Produce Exchange and its effect on corn prices, which was read before the Society on December 17, 1901.

LAFFAN'S AGENCY announces from New York that Mr. Henry Phipps has just given 250,000*l.* for the establishment of a hospital at Philadelphia for the study, treatment and prevention of tuberculosis. The Pasteur Institute in Paris will be the model for the new establishment, which, however, is to devote itself exclusively to tuberculosis.

AN International Fire Prevention Congress will be held in London on July 7-10 in connection with the International Fire Exhibition at Earl's Court.

THE *Times* correspondent at St. Johns reports that Lieutenant Peary has decided to make another attempt to reach the North Pole. He is looking for a suitable steamer for a voyage next summer.