

PROF. LADISLAV ČELAKOVSKÝ.

AFTER a long and painful illness, due to a serious internal malady of many years' standing, Prof. Čelakovský, the well-known and brilliant botanist, passed away at Prague on November 24, at the age of sixty-seven.

It was with the morphological department of botanical science that Čelakovský chiefly identified himself.

His papers dealing with evolutionary problems appear to date from the year 1868 with the memoir "On the General Evolution of the Vegetable Kingdom." The theses "On the Different Forms and the Meaning of the Alternation of Generations in Plants" (1874) and "On the Threefold Alternation of Generations in the Vegetable Kingdom" (1877) appear to us to afford so adequate a solution of this great subject as to cause wonder that botanists should still vex their minds by discussion of it. Two treatises which must long keep his memory green, while helping to establish the supremacy of his genius, are those on "The Law of Reduction in Flowers" (1894) and on "The Evolution of the Flower," in two parts (1896 and 1900); at the latter end of the second part, an interesting discussion and, in our view, a probable solution of the of late much-debated phenomenon of "double-fertilisation" in Angiosperms is introduced. These works of our author are, we fear, far too little known or appreciated.

To many botanists, Čelakovský will be best known by his voluminous writings, published in many and various periodicals, on the morphological nature of the ovule, a subject which occupied his attention from 1874 onwards and which his surpassing talent completely illuminated. Both in this and other difficult cases, he relied almost entirely on teratological evidence for the final solution of the problem. It is this position, well brought out in his memoir in *Lotos* of 1874, "On the Relationship between the Different Methods of Morphological Research," which caused so much opposition to him from fellow-workers in the same fields.

During the latter part of his career, Čelakovský performed the enormous service of what we consider to be the complete unravelling and elucidation of the nature of the female flower in Coniferæ, a subject hitherto utterly obscure and bristling with difficulties, but now, to our mind, entirely solved once for all. The author's views are contained chiefly in "Die Gymnospermen" (1890) and "Nachtrag zu meiner Schrift über die Gymnospermen" (1897).

Another important field of botanical research yielded scope for the display of his great powers, viz., that connected with the building-up of the stem and its members. Three of the principal papers treating of this subject are "On Terminal Members" (1876), "On Cases of Branching Underlying the Phytostatic Law" (*Pringsheim's Jahrbücher*, vol. xxxii.) and "The Segmentation of the Stem" (1901). The latter is an elaboration and wide expansion of the bare principles laid down long ago by Gaudichaud, and revolutionises all modern conceptions of the subject.

Many memoirs have, of necessity, been left unnoticed in this brief sketch; suffice to add that what appears to have been the last paper published by him, at least in German, was that on "The Cortication of the Stem by Leaf-bases," which appeared in 1902.

W. C. W.

NOTES.

WE published last week the wireless telegram sent by President Roosevelt to the King and also His Majesty's reply thereto. This latter message was not sent by wireless telegraphy, the reason being that at the time it was dispatched the nearest telegraph office to Poldhu was closed, and so it was impossible to

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get the message to Poldhu, though its transmission from there to America could have been easily effected. The *Times* of Monday deals with this difficulty in a leader, and points out that the Post Office as a public institution ought immediately to afford the facilities of connection between Mullion and Poldhu for which the Marconi Company asks. It is only a matter of erecting a couple of miles of telegraph line and providing for a continuous service, and this should certainly be done without any delay. The Post Office is said to be "considering the matter," but in the interests of the public and in fairness to the Marconi Company, the "consideration" ought to be cut short and the necessary connection made at once. As the *Times* rightly says, any questions of the ultimate trustworthiness and utility of the wireless system or of our telegraphic relations with the cable companies or other States have nothing to do with the Post Office, at any rate at the present time. All they are asked to do is to provide facilities for telegraphing to a customer likely to make large use of them. It is sincerely to be hoped that the Post Office will realise that it owes it as a duty to the public to remove immediately this purely artificial hindrance to the development of what may possibly be a great commercial enterprise. Such action would be impossible in any other country.

AN influential committee has been formed in Rome to take measures to honour the memory of Father A. Secchi, S.J., the distinguished astronomer and meteorologist, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, which occurred on February 26, 1878. The president of the committee, Father G. Lais, S.J., vice-director of the Vatican Observatory (address, Via Torre Argentina, 76, Rome), will be glad to add the names of scientific men and institutions to the list of those interested in this celebration. Father Secchi was for many years director of the observatory of the Collegio Romano, now occupied by the Italian Central Meteorological Office, and his well known meteorograph was erected there in 1858. It was in connection with this observatory that almost all Secchi's work was done in solar and terrestrial physics. He published several volumes of the *Memorie dell' Osservatorio del Collegio Romano*, 1852-1863, and began, in the year 1862, the *Bollettino meteorologico*, of which seventeen volumes appeared, and contained many valuable discussions by himself and others. The Italian Spectroscopic Society owes its foundation to his energy. He was the author of numerous papers and also of books on the sun, the stars and the unity of physical forces.

PROF. E. B. POULTON, F.R.S., has been elected president of the Entomological Society for the session 1903-1904. Prof. Poulton has nominated as vice-presidents the Rev. Dr. Fowler, Prof. Meldola, F.R.S., and Dr. D. Sharp, F.R.S.

AT a general meeting of the Linnean Society on January 15, it was resolved to take the necessary steps to obtain a supplementary charter embodying certain alterations in the constitution of the Society. A motion was carried in favour of adding the words "without distinction of sex" to the existing paragraph of the charter referring to the admission of fellows, so that when the supplementary charter has been obtained, women will be eligible for election into the Society.

ON Saturday, January 24, a cone 800 feet in height is reported to have been blown off Mont Pelée by a volcanic eruption.

A TELEGRAM, through Reuter's Agency, received at New York from Kingstown, St. Vincent, states that an eruption of the Soufrière occurred at noon on January 22. A whirling, incandescent cloud was seen to shoot from the volcano clear into the sky, followed by a black cloud, which rapidly ascended to a great height and was visible throughout the island. Sand fell at Château Belair.