

PROF. GEORGE RAYET.

TO the long list of astronomers recently deceased, with the greatest regret we have to add the name of Prof. George Rayet, who for five-and-twenty years directed the Observatory of Bordeaux with equal vigour and success. Born in 1839, and entering the Paris Observatory in the early 'sixties, the name of Rayet not only recalls to us the ancient history of that establishment, when its fortunes were guided by Le Verrier and Delaunay, but the forty years that separate us from that period embrace the new departures that have been made, in more than one of which Rayet may be said to have assisted. For example, at that time Le Verrier was engaged in the creation of an international bureau for the furtherance of meteorological study. The subject of weather forecasting was then in its infancy, and Le Verrier was endeavouring to give scientific accuracy and precision to the method. Into this department and the allied subject of storm warnings Rayet was early initiated. Similarly his astronomical career coincides very approximately with the time in which spectroscopic studies have been vigorously prosecuted, and in this department he laboured strenuously. It may be recalled that he was one of the observers of the famous solar eclipse of 1868, when the characteristic light of hydrogen was first perceived in the solar prominences, and we were further led to the study of the helium ray. In another direction Prof. Rayet was again a pioneer, when, in conjunction with M. Wolf, he detected that peculiar variety of gaseous star with which his name has been particularly associated. The three typical representatives found in the constellation Cygnus are now members of a tolerably large class, the spectroscopic examination of which has done much to widen our conceptions of stellar chemistry.

As professor of astronomy Rayet was much engaged in teaching, and as occupant of the chair of physical astronomy at Bordeaux he was naturally pointed out as the most appropriate director of the new observatory it was proposed to construct in that town. Since 1881 this observatory has been in full activity, and a valuable series of volumes has been issued containing the work of the director and staff. These volumes can generally be divided into two sections, one giving the results of observations, the other the details of mathematical researches. Among the observations are given the coordinates of stars, the position of comets, and nebulae and measures of double stars. In the memoirs there are signs that Prof. Rayet still retained his old fervour for meteorological study, but we have, in addition, inquiries connected with problems arising out of the construction of the International Star Chart.

In his conduct of the observatory Prof. Rayet was indefatigable; its interests he defended with energy, and his administration was able and judicious. While French science will regret his removal, his immediate associates will mourn his loss as that of a friend whose sympathy, knowledge, and experience were ever at their command.

W. E. P.

NOTES.

THE annual meeting of the British Medical Association will next year be held at Exeter; the president-elect is Dr. H. Davy.

THE appointment of Prof. Hermann Thoms as director of the Pharmaceutical Institute of the University of Berlin at Dahlem is announced.

THE death is announced of Dr. Adolf Voss, director of the prehistoric section of the Royal Berlin Museum.

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WE regret to have to record the death, on July 27, of Mr. Richard Glascott Symes, who retired from service on the Geological Survey in 1900. Mr. Symes was born at Kingston, Dublin, in 1840; he joined the survey as assistant-geologist in 1863, and in 1869 was made geologist. After a long period of useful work in Ireland, he was transferred to Scotland in 1890. Most of his work will be found recorded in the Memoirs of the Geological Survey.

WITH reference to the recent correspondence in our columns concerning the Geological Survey of Canada (see NATURE, June 21, p. 175, and July 12, p. 245), Mr. A. P. Low has sent us a certified copy of a report of a committee of the Privy Council, approved by the Governor-General in Council on January 5, 1892, which reads as follows:—

“Geological Survey.

“That in accordance with the provisions of 53 Victoria, chap. 11, an act respecting the Geological Survey. . . .
2. Bell, Robert, LL.D., M.D., F.R.S.C., Assistant Director and Chief Geologist—\$2,250.00

“(Signed) JOHN J. MCGEE,

“Clerk of the Privy Council.”

A PARTY of French medical men is about to visit Germany for the purpose of inspecting the medical institutions of the country. Three days will be spent in Berlin, and other cities and towns visited will include Cologne, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Munich, Bonn, Heidelberg, and Marburg. A committee of entertainment has been formed under the presidency of Prof. von Bergmann.

STEPS are being taken by the German Government to encourage sea fisheries in view of the national importance of this industry in furnishing a recruiting ground for the navy and the mercantile marine. A fishing cutter having an auxiliary engine of twenty horse-power and every modern equipment has, says the *Cologne Gazette*, been constructed at the Government expense, and after being tested in practice, and if necessary improved, will be adopted as a model for further fishing craft which are to be built, with the assistance of grants from the Imperial Treasury.

CAPTAIN LENFANT, the French explorer, is, according to the *Siècle*, about to leave on another expedition to West Africa in order to discover, if possible, a navigable waterway connecting Lake Chad with the coast of the Atlantic. It will be remembered that in his expedition of 1903-4 Captain Lenfant ascertained that a through waterway existed along the Niger, the Benue, the Mayo-Kebbi, the Logone, and the Shari, but he was unable to follow it from beginning to end by boat, as the Mayo-Kebbi was found to be obstructed by rapids, round which it was necessary to travel by land.

ACCORDING to a Reuter telegram from St. Petersburg, violent earthquake shocks were felt on August 13 in the districts of Jarkent and Kopal, in the government of Semirechensk, Central Asia.

THE *Pioneer Mail* for July 27 states that earthquake shocks were felt at Mussoorie, Lahore, Delhi, and Naggara (Kangra) on the morning of July 21.

DR. H. W. WILEY, chemist to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has been elected president of the commission appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Commerce and Labour, and the Secretary of Agriculture to formulate rules and regulations for the enforcement in America of the pure food law. The public hearings by the commission are to begin in New York on September 17.