

ALBERT DE LAPPARENT.

GEOLOGISTS throughout the world will be grieved to hear that one of the best known and most illustrious of their number, M. de Lapparent, has passed away after a brief illness. It seems but yesterday since, with so notable a company of his fellow-countrymen, he attended the centenary celebrations of the Geological Society here, apparently in the fulness of health, and with still many years of vigorous life before him. Lately, however, he had not been well, and for a time his condition had even given cause for some anxiety. But the danger seemed to have passed off, and his friends hoped soon to welcome him back to his place at the Academy of Sciences in Paris. But a rapid change for the worse supervened, and he died in the early part of last week at the age of sixty-seven years.

The loss sustained not only by geology, but by science at large, through the death of so accomplished a writer cannot at once be fully appreciated. It was not so much by the extent of his contributions to original research as by the philosophical discussion of all contemporary investigation regarding the history of the earth that he gained the commanding position which he held for so many years. His well-known essay on the Pays de Bray, published in 1879, proved what he could have achieved had he devoted himself to field-work. His "Traité de Géologie," which first appeared in 1881, showed the full bent of his genius by its luminous presentation of every department of the science, its admirably logical arrangement, and its characteristic elegance and clearness of style. The first edition formed a single volume, but in the course of a quarter of a century it was continually augmented and enriched, until, when the fifth edition was issued two years ago, it formed three volumes, with an aggregate of more than 2000 pages. This noble treatise will remain as its author's best monument. It has taken its place as an indispensable book of reference and suggestive guidance to every student of modern geology, and it will in future years be consulted as an ample exposition of the condition of the science at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The later editions of the "Traité," among many improvements and additions which the author's wide range of reading enabled him to make, have especially been marked by the numerous maps introduced into the text in illustration of the geographical features of different regions in successive geological periods. Following up the brilliant outlines of Neumayr and the generalisations of Suess, M. de Lapparent embodied in definite charts what he conceived to have been the distribution of land and sea throughout the ages of the earth's history. No one can peruse these restorations without a sense of the enormous amount of research which they involved in the published geological literature of every part of the globe. Although they could only be tentative, for the data obtainable are often meagre and not always trustworthy, yet as sketches of what may have been the geography of the earth's surface in the remote past they are replete with interest and suggestiveness. The author's other minor text-books on geology, mineralogy and physical geography, distinguished, as they are, by the same lucidity of arrangement and elegance of expression, have been of the greatest service in furthering the progress of these branches of science in the general advance of education.

There was something eminently attractive in de Lapparent. His gentle and kindly manner drew men of all nationalities to him. His charm as a speaker led to his being continually called upon to address an assembled company. The well-modulated voice, the felicitous choice of words, and the flashes of

humour made his speeches delightful to listen to. Under a playfulness of conversation he would from time to time reveal the depths of his serious nature. He was an eminently religious man, and sacrificed not a little in life for the sake of his convictions. No temptation could induce him to abandon the Institut Catholique, where from its foundation he continued to be one of its pillars of strength. So widely recognised were his personal qualities as well as his scientific distinction and his literary accomplishments, that on the death of Berthelot last year the Académie des Sciences could find no more fitting successor as secrétaire perpétuel than Albert de Lapparent. By his death the cause of science has been deprived of one of its most strenuous and successful advocates, and those who were privileged with his friendship have to mourn one whose memory they will never cease to cherish.

A. G.

M. ALBERT LANCASTER.

M. LANCASTER, whose death was announced recently, was connected with the Royal Observatory of Belgium for so many years that it is impossible, as it would be undesirable, to disconnect his career from that of the institution he served so well. He saw the observatory grow in extent and reputation under several directors, from Quetelet to Lecointe, and gave loyal and devoted service to each. The site shifted from Brussels to Uccle, where a new and modern observatory replaced the modest building that long did duty, but M. Lancaster remained true to its fortunes. With the change of building and with the enlargement of its usefulness, M. Lancaster had to adapt himself to new conditions, but throughout the continual onward development, his energy and industry contributed not a little to the maintenance of the prestige of the observatory with which he was so long connected.

In three distinct ways M. Lancaster deserved well of science and his countrymen. In his capacity of librarian to the observatory, he appreciated the rapid extension of astronomical literature, and early recognised the desirability of making known to all what had been accomplished by individual effort, and of placing at the disposition of those who were engaged in a particular inquiry the results achieved by others similarly engaged. He took steps to give practical effect to this view, and not only did he publish several useful time-saving compilations, but he was led to the collection and arrangement of a vast mass of information, which in collaboration with the late director, M. Houzeau, was issued as an astronomical bibliography. Later and more complete compilations have necessarily superseded these early efforts, but Houzeau and Lancaster were the first to make any serious attempt to bridge the interval that separated the work of Lalande in 1802 from that of modern times.

Again, by the encouragement and assistance he gave to amateurs, M. Lancaster did much to create an interest in meteorology and astronomy throughout Belgium. He founded and edited the popular review, *Ciel et Terre*, which made the study of physics and astronomy attractive to the many, and fostered the true spirit of scientific inquiry. He gave to this periodical, which first appeared in 1880, the closest attention, wrote many articles for its pages, and by his enthusiasm made it not only a vehicle for the diffusion of information, but the means of encouraging a vast amount of amateur work in very varied directions.

Lastly, since 1898, he became director of the Meteorological Department of the Royal Observatory, and the successive volumes that have appeared bear-