

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-

ing upon the climatology of Belgium testify to his skill and energy. He was well qualified for this position because meteorology had for him many attractions. As early as 1876 he tried to give greater uniformity to the method of meteorological observing by publishing a code of instructions for observers, and throughout an active life he exhibited a keen interest in this branch of physics. His rain-chart of Belgium is a specimen of what he could accomplish by ingenuity and painstaking industry.

If M. Lancaster's services were not brilliant, they were persistent and practical. He admirably filled the position in which he was placed, and by his comparatively early death at the age of fifty-nine years the observatory has lost a capable and devoted servant. In his lifetime his scientific ardour was adequately acknowledged. He was a member of many learned societies at home and abroad, and in addition to being Chevalier de l'Ordre de Léopold, he was decorated with the Ordre de la Couronne du Congo, La Croix civique de 1^{re} Classe, and la Croix commémorative du Règne de S. M. Léopold II.

NOTES.

THREE years ago the late Sir Michael Foster described in these columns (vol. lxxi., p. 443) the foundation by Prof. A. Mosso of the Col d'Olen Laboratory, at an altitude of 3000 metres on the southern slopes of Monte Rosa. On that occasion it was pointed out that the financial condition of the laboratory left much to be desired, and the hope was expressed that Prof. Mosso would secure ere long the necessary additional funds required. We are glad to learn, from a pamphlet descriptive of recent work at the laboratory, that the income of the institution has improved greatly, the subscriptions now reaching 117,504 francs, being very near the 120,000 francs originally considered necessary. It has been decided that the affairs of the laboratory shall be administered by a committee consisting of the professors of physiology, botany, and hygiene in the University of Turin, with the president and treasurer of the Italian Alpine Club. Prof. A. Mosso is the president, and Prof. O. Mattiolo the secretary. As was mentioned last week, two places in the laboratory are reserved to England, on the nomination of the Royal Society. Applications for a place should be made in the first instance to the Royal Society.

WE regret to see the announcement of the death, in his eighty-fourth year, of Prof. K. Möbius, professor of zoology in the University of Berlin.

ON Thursday next, May 21, Dr. Alexander Scott will deliver the first of a course of three lectures at the Royal Institution on "The Chemistry of Photography."

PROF. A. LAWRENCE ROTCH, the founder and director of Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory, Massachusetts, U.S.A., has been elected an honorary member of the Royal Meteorological Society.

A REUTER message from Athens announces that the German Emperor has presented Prof. Dörfeld, head of the German Archæological Institute there, with a sum of 5000 marks (250*l.*) for the purpose of starting excavations on the site of the ancient Pylos.

At the meeting of the National Academy of Science held in Washington on April 23, the following foreign associates were elected:—Prof. Svante A. Arrhenius, Stockholm; Prof. J. Larmor, Sec.R.S., Cambridge; Dr. Ivan P. Pavlov, St. Petersburg; Prof. Hugo R. van Seeliger, Munich; and Prof. T. Barrois, Lille.

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THE death is announced of Dr. Hermann Wedding, professor of metallurgy at the Berlin School of Mines. He was an honorary member of the Iron and Steel Institute, and in 1896 received the Bessemer gold medal of that society. He translated Dr. Percy's works on metallurgy into German, and was the author of a large number of important metallurgical treatises.

THE Paris correspondent of the *Times* states that, within a year, in virtue of a contract with a French firm, Spain is to be provided with wireless telegraphy stations. The Canaries and the Balearics are to receive, respectively, seven and two stations, which will keep them constantly in touch with the fifteen stations of the Peninsular coast. It is anticipated that radio-telegraphic communications will shortly be arranged between Pernambuco and Tenerife. In that case the Spanish stations will form a link between Europe and South America.

IN the Journal of the Franklin Institute (vol. clxv., No. 4) Dr. Persifer Frazer traces the history of the Franklin Institute from its foundation in 1824 to the present time, giving portraits of the eminent men who have helped in the development of the society. A subscription of 50,000 dollars, given to the building fund by Mrs. Anna W. Walker in memory of her father, has assured the institute a new lease of life under greatly improved conditions.

THE death is announced of Mr. Caleb Barlow, chief preparator of fossils in the British Museum (Natural History). Mr. Barlow entered the British Museum as a mason in 1874, and gradually acquired remarkable skill in the preparation and restoration of fossil skeletons. He was especially successful in mounting imperfect specimens and modelling missing parts to complete them. Much of his unofficial time was devoted to other institutions, and examples of his skilful work are to be found in many museums.

THE *Comptes rendus* of the Paris Academy of Sciences for May 4 contains a communication, by M. Alfred Angot, with respect to the application of wireless telegraphy to the forecasting of the weather. The communication is practically amplifying the note by M. Bigourdan, to which reference was made in NATURE of May 7, and gives a *résumé* of the present situation. It is mentioned that for the last year the Meteorological Office has received each day wireless messages from several ships, the information being regularly published in the Daily Weather Report. M. Angot states that this information adds somewhat to our knowledge of the state of the atmosphere over the Atlantic. He directs attention to the report of Dr. Shaw on this subject to the International Meteorological Committee at Paris in September, 1907. It is pointed out that the obstacle to the extension of the use of wireless messages for weather forecasting is one purely of finance, and the necessary expense precludes the English and French weather offices from taking full advantage of the opportunity afforded.

"THE Daylight Saving Bill," which passed its second reading in the House of Commons on March 26, and is now before a committee of the House, proposes that early on the morning of each of the first four Sundays in April all the public clocks shall be set forward twenty minutes and be set back twenty minutes on each of the first four Sunday mornings in September. Cape Town has been cited as an example to show how easily the origin of public time can be changed. But Sir David Gill shows, in a letter in Tuesday's *Times*, that even to change the origin of time once for all requires careful preparation, and that to