

THE death occurred in January this year, at seventy-five years of age, of DR. JULES HARMAND, who was well known for his extensive explorations in French Indo-China. In 1873 Dr. Harmand took part in the investigations of the ruins of Angkor, in Cambodia. His explorations in subsequent years embraced the basin of the Tonle Sap and the lake of that name, as well as the country between there and Bassac, on the Mekong. In 1877 Dr. Harmand explored the Bolouveu plateau in Laos, and succeeded in crossing the mountainous country to Hué, in Annam. These explorations shed much light on the interior of Indo-China, and gained for Dr. Harmand in 1878 the gold medal of the Paris Geographical Society.

Later he entered the diplomatic service and was for many years French ambassador at Tokio. Dr. Harmand was the author of "Domination et Colonisation," published in 1910, and he prepared a French edition of Sir John Strachey's "India" in 1892.

WE learn with regret from *Science* of April 22 that the death occurred on April 14 of DR. HENRY PLATT CUSHING, who was for twenty-six years professor of geology in Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, and for about the same time geologist in the Adirondack region for the Geological Survey of New York.

Notes.

"CULTURED" pearls, recently introduced by a Japanese firm, appear to have caused some alarm in the gem trade. It has long been known that pearls are the result of local irritation in the pearl-oyster or pearl-mussel, caused by the introduction of some foreign matter—usually the larva of a parasitic organism which spends another part of its life-cycle in an animal that feeds on the mollusc. The mollusc retaliates by coating the unbidden guest with a smooth layer of nacre (identical with the mother-of-pearl layer of its shell, and consisting mainly of the orthorhombic crystalline modification of calcium carbonate corresponding with the mineral aragonite); and the resulting pearl is the elegant tomb of the objectionable parasite. The Chinese have for centuries produced this result artificially by inserting objects between the shell and mantle of the fresh-water mussel, and figures of Buddha on the inner surface of such shells are common. The difficulty hitherto has been to cause the formation of a spherical secretion unattached to the shell of the mollusc. This now appears to have been achieved by Mr. Mikimoto as a result of experiments extending over forty years. It is said that fragments of mother-of-pearl are inserted in the tissues of the molluscs, which are then returned to the sea for a period of several years. Another obvious method would be to infect the oyster-bed with the appropriate parasite. But, whether the foreign matter is introduced accidentally or intentionally, the result produced by the oyster must be the same. The qualification "artificial" would here apply rather to the pretence that the products are essentially different. Attempts on the part of the trade to discredit what is apparently an interesting scientific discovery are clearly made only with the view of keeping up inflated prices. The same selfish fight was made some years ago against the artificially formed rubies and sapphires (mis-called "synthetic," "reconstructed," and even "imitation"), which can be produced much more economically than the naturally formed stones. Strawberries raised in pots under glass are sold without question as strawberries—but wisely at a higher price. Pearls are high in price because of their rarity, but if they were plentiful and the more brightly

coloured mother-of-pearl were rare the cry would be very different.

THE Kelvin gold medal for engineering was founded in 1914, principally by British and American engineers, to commemorate the achievements of Lord Kelvin in those branches of science which apply specially to engineering. The award is made by a committee of the presidents of the representative British engineering institutions, and recommendations are received and considered from similar bodies in all parts of the world. The first recipient was Dr. William Cawthorne Unwin, and the presentation was made by Mr. A. J. Balfour in the hall of the Institution of Civil Engineers on Wednesday, May 4. In the course of his address Mr. Balfour said that Lord Kelvin combined in a manner which had scarcely been equalled before, except perhaps by Archimedes, the power of theorising on the darkest and most obscure secrets of Nature, and at the same time of carrying out efficiently and practically some engineering feat. It was therefore fitting that we should remember Kelvin as one of the leaders in the movement which compelled all modern engineers worthy of the name to be not only men of practice, but also of theory. Dr. Unwin's name was honoured wherever engineering was studied in English-speaking lands, and he had imprinted his own seal upon the whole course of study which young engineers had now to pursue. In his reply Dr. Unwin congratulated the young engineers of to-day upon their advantages in the possession of well-organised colleges and on the recognition by all universities, even Oxford and Cambridge, of a faculty of engineering.

WE are very glad that a reasonable agreement has been arrived at between supporters and opponents of the Plumage (Prohibition) Bill, with the result that the Bill passed through Standing Committee D of the House of Commons on May 10. It has often been suggested that an advisory committee should be set up to prepare a schedule of birds the plumage of which might be imported, but this has been objected to by promoters of prohibitive measures. The agreement now arrived at includes the following terms:—