

Baron de Montyon, F.R.S. (1733-1820), and the Paris Academy of Sciences.

ANTOINE JEAN BAPTISTE ROBERT AUGET, Baron de Montyon, economist and philanthropist, was born at Paris on Dec. 23, 1733, and he died there on Dec. 29, 1820, at the age of eighty-seven years. In that city his name is held in honoured remembrance for his public work and enlightened beneficence. Whilst domiciled in England—for reasons which are given below—de Montyon was, on Nov. 5, 1812, elected into the Royal Society of London. Soon after, he signed the charter book and was formally admitted.

Trained in France for the law, Montyon held various important provincial and State appointments, exhibiting marked independence of thought and freedom from bias, associated with an integrity certainly none too prominent amongst some of his contemporaries.

Prior to the period of revolutionary turmoil, M. de Montyon had made anonymous and handsome donations to the Paris Academy of Sciences, the French Academy, and the Academy of Medicine. These became null and void in the political upheaval. They were, however, restored before his death.

De Montyon, rich by inheritance, and disinclined to parley with any new regime, emigrated in 1792, settling for a time at Geneva, afterwards transferring to London. He did not return to Paris until 1815, being then eighty-two years old. Count Rumford had died in the previous year; Davy was then thirty-seven years old. The English journals of the period of de Montyon's residence in London are provokingly silent, although two works by him had been published there. Space will not permit of quoting their lengthy titles.

Appended is a copy of de Montyon's certificate of qualifications for the Royal Society:—

"Anthony J. B. R. Auget de Montyon, Baron de Montyon, Counsellor of State in the late Royal Government of France, and now residing at No. 38 Brewer Street, Golden Square; a gentleman of eminent acquirements in political economy and various branches of Natural Knowledge, being desirous of becoming a fellow of the Royal Society, We the undersigned do on our personal acquaintance with him, recommend him as worthy of the honor he solicits, and likely to become a valuable Member. C. Blagden, John Symmons, J. Planta, Samuel Foart Simmons, Wm. Tooke, J. Guillemard, John Sinclair, Gilbert Blane, Geo. Thos. Staunton, Geo. Pearson."

It is not a little curious that de Montyon seems never—either before or after his election—to have dined at the Royal Society Club, especially when one calls to mind that Sir Joseph Banks was president of the Society at the time, and frequently introduced foreigners of distinction. M. Coquebert de Montbret, a compatriot, was among these, and he dined, so Sir Archibald Geikie has told us, on four occasions after 1809. Here it may be interpolated that de Montbret was, with Laplace and Fourier, on a commission for the institution of the Montyon prize in statistics (1817). Doubtless sufficient reason is found in the quietness of Montyon's life, necessitated by the circumstances

of exile. Moreover, he had never sought the fashionable world, preferring the society of men of letters. It is recorded that he was a good conversationalist, and prolific in attractive reminiscences. Whilst in England he disbursed large sums of money in support of companions in exile, and also amongst the French prisoners of war. His portrait shows an aspect of restful dignity, singularly resembling that of Newton.

At Montyon's obsequies strict simplicity was observed. His own wishes in this respect were unusual: "Je veux être enterré avec la plus grande simplicité, ce qui doit être exécuté d'autant plus exactement que ce qui sera économisé sur cet article tourne à l'avantage de mes legs." Notwithstanding, hundreds of folk of the humbler classes attended in token of regard. The French Academy nominated one of its members to deliver a eulogy. In the twilight of his age Montyon had recalled words that he used to the King in 1796: "Ma vie n'a pas eu un grand éclat. . . . Celles de mes actions qui ont eu une publicité indispensable prouvent que je n'ai point l'âme servile."

The prizes which are in the gift of the Academy of Sciences are enumerated below; and some notes added indicate slight variations which have followed their institution.

(1) PRIX MONTYON DE STATISTIQUE.—At a meeting of the Academy in September 1817, Laplace informed his colleagues of an anonymous offer of a capital sum of 7000 francs for the establishment of an annual prize for statistical researches. Acceptance followed, and Laplace, Montbret, and Fourier were among the members of a commission charged to prepare a scheme of management. The first allocation was made in 1819. In the year 1910, on the motion of M. Gaston Darboux, a sum of 1000 francs was decided on as the primary gift, with two commendatory awards of 500 francs. Further, an original limitation that the research should refer only to France and her colonies, is no longer enforced.

(2) PRIX MONTYON DE PHYSIOLOGIE EXPÉRIMENTALE.—In June 1818 the Academy received another offer, in similar circumstances, for the foundation of a yearly prize in experimental physiology. Berthollet, Hallé, and others drew up a scheme. Later, the donor supplemented the gift. As a rule there are two awards of 750 francs each. We notice here and there in the list of awards the names of Englishmen, for example: Dr. A. D. Waller (1887) and Dr. A. B. Griffiths (1893).

(3) PRIX MONTYON DE MÉCANIQUE.—In August 1819, Laplace presented a note designating this annual prize, and from the same source. The attribution is now 750 francs. In exact terms the gift is for . . . "instruments utiles aux progrès de l'agriculture, des arts mécaniques et des sciences pratiques et spéculatives."

(4) PRIX MONTYON DE MÉDECINE ET CHIRURGIE ET PRIX MONTYON DES ARTS INSALUBRES.—This conjoint prize was dedicated by the terms of Baron Montyon's will, under date Nov. 12, 1819. There

were other and large benefactions, which, however, are outside the scope of this notice. The first prize was given in 1825. A commission had formulated regulations, and amongst the members were Cuvier, Fourier, and Berthollet. The terms of the award are of wide application, whilst the prizes are open

to persons of all nationalities. In the first section are three yearly gifts of 2500 francs, and three *mentions honorables* of 1500 francs. In the second section (in effect, chemistry) there is a prize of 2500 francs, with a second of 1500 francs for meritorious entry. T. E. JAMES.

News and Views.

FOR several years Dr. Wilhelm Freudenberg has collected fossils from the sand-pits in the Pleistocene river deposits near Heidelberg, from which the lower jaw of *Homo heidelbergensis* was obtained. We now learn, from a communication which he has made to Sir Arthur Smith Woodward, that among the mammalian remains which he has discovered there are no less than eighteen fragments of fossil man and apes. The tibia ascribed to Heidelberg man is short and very stout, with an inward twist, and in many ways like that of a big gorilla. A fragment of a femur is also very gorilla-like. The second metatarsal is curved as in a chimpanzee, and the first metacarpal is twice as large as that of a modern man. These remains are associated with *Elephas antiquus*. Other fragments found not with this elephant, but with *E. trogontherii*, belong to a Primate about as large as an orang. There is a sagittal crest on the parietal bone, and a piece of lower jaw resembles that of *Sivapithecus* rather than *Dryopithecus*. The pelvis shows several features of that of a chimpanzee, and the femur and tibia are slender. Other fragments of the same age belong to two smaller Primates related to the gibbons. They seem to have had comparatively small canine teeth. In association with them, one long and remarkably human femur, an apparently human pubis, and a human navicular bone, are considered by Dr. Freudenberg to belong to a forerunner of Neanderthal man. In the upper beds, with *Rhinoceros etruscus*, were also found implements of quartzite, charcoal, and burnt fragments of bone.

PALÆONTOLOGISTS and anthropologists will await with great interest Dr. Freudenberg's detailed description of his finds. Remains of monkeys of Pleistocene age are known from Norfolk, the Thames valley, France, and Germany, but no trace of the man-like apes has hitherto been discovered in Europe of later date than the Lower Pliocene. If Dr. Freudenberg's results are confirmed, the search for the earliest ancestors of man in Europe is not so hopeless as it is commonly supposed to be.

THE retirement is announced in the *Lancet* of Dr. A. B. Macallum, professor of biochemistry in McGill University, Montreal, and formerly administrative chairman of the Honorary Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Canada. Prof. Macallum, who was successively lecturer and professor in physiology and later professor of biochemistry in the University of Toronto, introduced a full experimental course in physiology at Toronto so long ago as 1886; at that time, no similar course for students was anywhere in existence. His research work at first

was devoted particularly to the origin of hæmoglobin from the chromatin of hæmatoblasts. This led to a demonstration that chromatin is an iron-holding compound and that hæmoglobin is, as it were, a degeneration product of chromatin. Later, Prof. Macallum investigated the absorption of iron compounds in the intestines, the composition of the blood plasma of invertebrates and vertebrates, and the microchemical detection of potassium, chlorine, phosphorus, calcium, iron, and copper. His latest work has dealt with the effects of surface tension on the distribution of salts in living matter. Prof. Macallum was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1906; in 1920 he left Toronto to take the chair of biochemistry at McGill University. He will be succeeded by Prof. J. B. Collip, whose name will be remembered in connexion with the discovery of insulin.

THE honorary secretary of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants writes to inform us that the leading article on "The Technical Expert in the Civil Service," published in our issue of Dec. 10, has been welcomed by the professional group of civil servants. He directs attention also to the fact that, since its foundation in January 1919, the Institution has worked energetically for "a thorough reform in matters affecting the status of the technical expert," and has met with some success over a limited area in bringing conditions of employment of similar professional staffs in different departments to a uniform basis. Further, by recourse to the arbitration machinery set up for the Civil Service in 1925, it has succeeded over a rather wide area, but in many cases, in obtaining piecemeal improvements in salary scales. He also points out that the reform of the non-technical branches of the Civil Service was only carried through after a series of Royal Commissions, and states that, although the Council of the Institution has loyally worked the system of Whitley Councils recently created, it is convinced that the reforms which are urgently required in the technical branches will not be achieved without an authoritative public inquiry. We entirely concur in this view, and, indeed, in the leading article on "The Expert in the Civil Service" published in *NATURE* of Aug. 27 last, urged that a Royal Commission should be appointed to examine into and report on the present position of professional workers in the State service. We are of opinion that the need for modifications of the present Civil Service system is of pressing importance, and that in the interest of both efficiency and economy no time should be lost in providing for a comprehensive inquiry of the nature indicated.