

University and Educational Intelligence

CAMBRIDGE.—The Gedge Prize for 1934 has been awarded to J. S. Turner, of Selwyn College.

Two lectures will be delivered by Prof. J. Schouten of the Technical High School, Delft, on "Projective Relativity". They will be delivered at 5.30 on October 23, and 4.30 on October 24 in St. John's College.

In connexion with the visit of His Majesty the King to open the new Library on October 22, it is proposed to confer the honorary degree of Sc.D. on Prof. L. J. Henderson, professor of biological chemistry at Harvard University and upon Dr. Karl Landsteiner, member of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research.

Dr. F. Kidd, St. John's College, has been appointed superintendent of the Low Temperature Research Station in succession to the late Sir William Hardy.

At Trinity College, M. Black, University demonstrator in geology, has been elected to a fellowship.

OXFORD.—In his oration delivered on the termination of his second year of office, the Vice-Chancellor dealt with several matters of scientific interest. After noticing the completion of the extension of the Radcliffe Science Library, which is to be opened for use on November 3 by the Princess Royal, he reported the successful setting up of the new solar telescope, with its accessory apparatus, under the skilful direction of the Savilian professor. Permission, subject to certain conditions, has been granted to the Radcliffe Trustees to establish an observatory in South Africa. Future developments of the means for scientific study will be carried out as soon as the necessary funds are forthcoming. Among these are the extension of the Lewis Evans collection into a museum of the history of science, the further endowment of the Department of Anthropology, an addition to the staff of the Hope professor of zoology, and further provision for the teaching of embryology and neurology. Several of these are regarded as urgent, but, for the time being, impracticable.

WALES.—It was announced at a meeting of the Court of Governors of University College, Cardiff, that the college has received a gift of £23,000 "from a generous donor and old friend of the college". The number of students in residence during the current session is 1,347. The figure shows an increase of 24, as compared with last year, in spite of new restrictions on the entry of medical students, and those in receipt of Board of Education grants.

On October 12, Sir William James Thomas officially opened the new laboratories of materia medica and pharmacology in the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Welsh National School of Medicine.

THE following awards of the Institution of Naval Architects have recently been made: Vickers Armstrong scholarship in naval architecture (1934) of the value of £150 a year for four years at the University of Glasgow to Mr. Gordon S. Milne, of Messrs. Hall Russell and Co., Glasgow; Duke of Northumberland prize (in connexion with the 1934 examinations for National (Higher) Certificates in naval architecture) to Mr. William P. Walker, of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow.

Science News a Century Ago

Diseases in Potatoes

In the early part of 1834, the Highland Society of Scotland (now the Highland and Agricultural Society) offered a premium of ten sovereigns "for the best essay on the nature and causes of the injury or disease of the Potato and on the best means of preventing or palliating it in future. . . . The attention of the writer is especially directed to the probable existence of insects in the sets or tubers, and if such have been detected, he is required to give a description of them and if possible, to transmit with his Essay, specimens of the insects". The essays had to be submitted before October 20, 1834, and some twenty competitors took part. The premium was offered because of the failure of the potato crop in Great Britain in the previous year. Various organisations interested themselves in the problem—notably the Highland Society and the Royal Dublin Society. The general conclusion arrived at was that the failure was due to the drought of the summer of 1833, as a consequence of which the crop was harvested very early, and in an immature condition. It is interesting to note that it was agreed that "the plant itself does not appear to have become materially deteriorated by having been so long in cultivation".

The North-West Passage

In 1833, Admiral Sir George Back (1796–1878), then holding the rank of commander, was sent out with an expedition to obtain information about Capt. John Ross, who had been in the north since 1829. On October 23, 1834, the *Times* said that "Letters from Captain Back were received yesterday morning at the office of the Royal Geographical Society the latest date being the 29th of April last, when the intelligence had just reached him of Captain Ross's return". Their contents were of a mixed character. He and his party were all well with the exception of Augustus, the Eskimo interpreter who had accompanied Sir John Franklin in both his journeys, but who had died on his way to join Back's party. The expedition had experienced a most distressing winter and many of the unhappy natives had fallen victims to famine in situations the most revolting to human nature. In a private letter, Back said, "My day is chiefly spent thus—before breakfast I read a portion of Scripture, and afterwards attend to my observations, study, draw (I have plenty of pencil sketches), work up my survey, take notes on Aurora, etc. At the same time I keep my eye upon whatever duty is going on, have an evening school twice a week, and read the service in French and English every Sunday. My guitar is cracked and jars abominably, but you will not be surprised at this when I add that I have been obliged to grease my hands daily to prevent their cracking also, for such is the dryness of the atmosphere that nothing can stand it." Back's expedition was notable for the discovery of the Great Fish River.

Hancock's Steam Carriages

Of the various projectors of steam road carriages, none came nearer commercial success than Walter Hancock (1799–1852). On October 25, 1834, the *Mechanics' Magazine* published a communication from him entitled, "A Statement of the Performances of the Autopsy and Era on the Road between London