

News and Views

Dr. Arnold Berliner and *Die Naturwissenschaften*

WE much regret to learn that on August 13 Dr. Arnold Berliner was removed from the editorship of *Die Naturwissenschaften*, obviously in consequence of non-Aryan policy. This well-known scientific weekly, which in its aims and features has much in common with NATURE, was founded twenty-three years ago by Dr. Berliner, who has been the editor ever since and has devoted his whole activities to the journal, which has a high standard and under his guidance has become the recognised organ for expounding to German scientific readers subjects of interest and importance. A personal friend of Dr. Berliner writes: "When addressing the editor on his seventieth birthday in the inaugurating page of a festival issue, Albert Einstein said, 'His journal cannot be imagined as absent from the scientific life of our time'. Extremely small, indeed, is the number of journals which fulfil the task of uniting by a strong bond the separated and highly specialised work of the leading students in the various domains of science. The editor's important rôle and his active contribution to the progress of research, in conducting a periodical of this kind, are of a different order of magnitude from that of an ordinary 'Fachzeitschrift'. In order to cope with his task, he is obliged to exert very definite leadership on a body of prominent men, everyone of whom is liable to see things distorted from the point of view marked by his own interests and achievements. The editor is the one who has to survey the broad stream of scientific development, to select which subject-matters are suitable for presenting to his readers, to have intimate knowledge of the abilities (scientific and otherwise) of his contributors and, finally, after deciding upon the best writer upon a particular subject, to coax him into fulfilling towards his colleagues a duty of which sometimes neither he nor they are aware and to which the man himself often feels little inclination. It would need a large volume (and, maybe, more than one) to embody only those first-class essays which would never have been written, had it not been for the impossibility of resisting our dear and esteemed friend's gentle command".

Centenary of Darwin's visit to the Galapagos Archipelago

ON September 16, 1835, in the course of the voyage of the *Beagle*, a call was made at the islands of the Galapagos archipelago in the Pacific. This visit was one of the most momentous incidents in the life of Charles Darwin, who was on board the ship as naturalist, for the observations which he was enabled to make gave that orientation to his thoughts which ultimately led him to formulate his theory of the evolution of species. He records in his diary: "The natural history of these islands is eminently curious and well deserves attention. Most of the organic productions are aboriginal creations, found nowhere

else; there is even a difference between the inhabitants of the different islands; yet all show a marked relationship with those of America, though separated from that continent by an open space of ocean between 500 and 600 miles in width. The archipelago is a little world within itself, or rather a satellite attached to America, whence it has derived a few stray colonists and has received the general character of its indigenous productions. Considering the small size of these islands, we feel the more astonished at the number of their aboriginal beings, and at their confined range. Seeing every height crowned with its crater, and the boundaries of most of the lava-streams still distinct, we are led to believe that within a period geologically recent the unbroken ocean was here spread out. Hence both in space and time, we seem to be brought somewhat near to that great fact—that mystery of mysteries—the first appearance of new beings on this earth."

Galapagos Exhibition at the Natural History Museum

To commemorate Darwin's visit to the Galapagos archipelago, a selection of the more characteristic forms of the reptiles and the birds, which were the elements of the fauna that especially claimed Darwin's attention, is exhibited in the Reptile Gallery of the British Museum (Natural History), South Kensington; some of the specimens, indeed, were collected by Darwin himself. Series of mocking-thrushes (*Nesomimus*) and finches (*Geospiza*) are arranged to show the variations in structure and distribution which are described in the "Journal of Researches" and which have puzzled ornithologists ever since. The characteristic giant tortoises, and marine and terrestrial iguanas are also shown, and attention is directed to the destruction of the fauna during the past century and to the imminent danger of its disappearance owing to the introduction and uncontrolled spread of predatory domestic animals.

Darwin and H.M.S. *Beagle*

THE president of the British Association, Prof. W. W. Watts, has received from H.M.S. *Beagle* a cablegram, recalling the centenary of Darwin's landing from the former *Beagle* on the Galapagos Islands. This important event in the history of biological science was duly noticed at the recent meeting of the Association in Norwich. (See NATURE of September 14, p. 426.) The cable pays tribute to "our most distinguished passenger", and adds that "the present *Beagle* salutes the British Association, the trustees of science". An appreciative acknowledgment, wishing good luck to the present *Beagle*, has been returned.

Bicentenary of James Keir, F.R.S.

ON September 29 occurs the bicentenary of the birth of James Keir, an able chemist and the friend

of Erasmus Darwin, Boulton, Watt, Priestley and Davy. The youngest of a family of eighteen and born in Stirlingshire, after attending the High School and University of Edinburgh he entered the Army and afterwards served for several years in the West Indies. Resigning his commission in 1768, he settled in the Midlands, became connected with various industrial enterprises and devoted himself to chemistry and geology. He was in turn a glass manufacturer at Stourbridge, an assistant to Boulton and Watt at Soho and the founder, with Alexander Blair, of a soap and alkali works. With Blair, too, in 1794 he opened the Tividale Colliery. In 1776 he translated Macquer's "Dictionary of Chemistry" and in 1777 published a treatise on elastic fluids or gases. He also contributed chemical papers to the Royal Society, and in 1785 was elected a fellow. A chemical dictionary of his own, of which he published the first part in 1789, he discontinued on his becoming convinced of the weakness of the phlogiston theory. For many years he lived at West Bromwich, where he died October 11, 1820, at the age of eighty-five years.

Adam Politzer, 1835-1920

ADAM POLITZER, one of the principal founders of otology, was born at Alberti in Hungary on October 1, 1835. He studied medicine in Vienna under Skoda, Rokitansky, Oppolzer and C. Ludwig, and qualified in 1859. In 1861 he was appointed lecturer in otology, and during the following years held a number of appointments in the University of Vienna connected with his speciality, being elected professor of otology in 1895 and director of the otological clinic in 1898. In addition to a textbook on otology first published in 1878, which ran through many editions and was translated into English in 1883 and 1902, he was the author of numerous articles on the anatomy and physiology of the ear and its diseases, especially suppurative otitis media and polypi. In 1864 he helped to found the *Archiv für Ohrenheilkunde*, and in 1895 the Austrian Otological Society. The Vienna ear clinic possesses a rich collection of anatomical and pathological specimens of the ear prepared by him. His name is attached to a method of inflation of the middle ear through the Eustachian tube by a pear-shaped rubber bag introduced through the nostril. He died in his eighty-fifth year on August 10, 1920.

Louis Ranvier, 1835-1922

LOUIS ANTOINE RANVIER, the eminent French histologist, was born at Lyons on October 2, 1835. His medical education took place in Paris, where he qualified in 1865, and two years later became Claude Bernard's assistant at the Collège de France. In 1875 he was appointed to the chair of general anatomy in the Paris faculty of medicine, and held this appointment for more than thirty years. In 1886 he was elected a member of the Paris Academy of Medicine and in the following year a member of the Academy of Sciences. He also became a member of numerous foreign academies and learned societies.

His principal works are the "Manuel d'histologie pratique", written in collaboration with Cornil (1869-76) and his "Traité technique d'histologie" (1875-82). He made numerous contributions to the proceedings of the Société de Biologie and Academy of Sciences, and published a large number of papers in the *Journal de l'Anatomie et de la Physiologie*, *Archives de Physiologie*, *Journal de Micrographie*, etc. The term 'Ranvier's nodes', which is familiar to every biological student, has been given to the annular constrictions of the neurilemma associated with discontinuity of the medullary sheath of the nerve fibre. Ranvier died on March 22, 1922, in his eighty-seventh year, at Vendranges, Loire, where he had been living in retirement for some years.

'Legislative Anthropology'

DR. ARTHUR MACDONALD, of Washington, D.C., and formerly fellow of Johns Hopkins University, is well known for his advocacy of the claims of 'legislative anthropology', that is, study of the legislative, political, psychological, sociological and physical status of members of a legislature or parliament. He holds that as chosen servants of the people, members of the United States Legislature, for example, coming from all sections, are truly representative, and afford a good opportunity of establishing the anthropological status of the country. He goes further and argues that a similar study in other countries would afford a basis for comparison as between nations. At present, his opportunities are confined to material from the United States. He has made a study of certain physical characters of eighty-nine members of Congress, of which the results were published in the *Congressional Record* of the Seventy-second Congress, First Session, under date May 11, 1932. The figures then given established some interesting correlations, especially when studied in their geographical distribution according to States. Dr. Macdonald has now instituted some interesting comparisons between these members of Congress and a number of the insane, although he admits that the latter have no distinctive physical character. The number of individuals measured in this category was 360. They were chosen for their intelligence and included ex-army and naval officers and professional men. The majority, however, had no more than common school education, and for the most part had practised trades. The following are some of the measurements: *Congress*—length of head, 196 mm.; breadth of head, 156 mm.; height of head, 139 mm. *Insane*—length of head, 190 mm.; breadth of head, 151 mm.; height of head, 139 mm. It is to be noted, however, that while stature and weight in members of Congress are respectively 177 cm. and 183 lb., in the insane they are 170 cm. and 150 lb. Obviously the figures need further analysis before any significant conclusion can emerge.

An Education Film—"Northern Lights"

THE sound film entitled "Northern Lights" seen recently at a private view at the offices of the Western Electric Co. at Bush House, Aldwych, London, W.C.2.