

## Science News a Century Ago

### Egyptian Mummies

THE *Gentleman's Magazine* of April 1837 relates that "on March 6 at the close of a series of six very interesting and instructive lectures on Egyptian antiquities delivered at Exeter Hall by Mr. Pettigrew that gentleman unwrapped a mummy presented for the occasion by Mr. Jones of the Admiralty. The inscription on the outer case differed from that on the inner. Both stated the party to have been a female, but the names and genealogies were different, and the latter stated the mother of the deceased to be living when her daughter died. It might be that the wrappings would settle this point; which, however, they did not—for no name was found on them, as often occurs. The mummy was Greco-Egyptian, and embalmed after the ancient manner, the bowels being extracted by an incision on the left flank, and the brains probably through the nostrils, as the nose was much broken. The legs were separately bandaged, and the ankles bound by strips of painted linen, about half an inch in breadth. The figures were not hieroglyphic, but simply ornamental. Bands of the same kind surrounded the arms, which were crossed upon the breast; and a similar circle went round the neck, with a thin golden scarabaeus in front. On each knee was also a thin piece of gold, resembling the lotus-flower; over each eye the providential eye of Osiris of the same material, and another golden ornament upon the top of the ridge of the nose. The upper wrappers were not voluminous, and of coarse nankeen-coloured linen. Then came a complete envelope of asphaltus, and below that the usual disposition and extent of linen robes. On the soles of the feet were slight sandals, transversely striped, black, white, and red, exactly like those painted at the bottom of the inner cases. The finger- and toe-nails were gilt, and there were rings on the fingers."

### Henslow's "Descriptive and Physiological Botany"

THE first article in the *Athenæum* of April 8, 1837, contained a notice of Prof. Henslow's "The Principles of Descriptive and Physiological Botany". John Stevens Henslow (1796-1861) was professor of mineralogy at Cambridge in 1822-27 and professor of botany in 1827-61. It was he who recommended Darwin as naturalist to H.M.S. *Beagle*. "If any person," said the *Athenæum*, "doubts the truth of the opinion now prevalent, that Botany has of late years undergone a great revolution . . . he has only to compare the introductory work of Professor Henslow with that of Smith, which although now almost forgotten, was, only a few years since, a standard book upon the subject in this country. . . . As a genuine view of the state of opinions upon physiological and structural botany up to the year 1836, we regard the work of Professor Henslow as a valuable addition to our introductory books. It embraces all that is most worthy of the student, briefly expressed in a clear methodical style, and, in general, with a just distinction between those modern speculations which are founded upon exact observations, and those which are mere creations of an inventive imagination."

### Prony's Absorption Brake

UNDER the heading "Dynamometric Check", the *Mechanics' Magazine* of April 8 said: "A Committee of the French Institute, composed of Messrs. Arago,

Dulong and Poncelet, has gone through a series of experiments on the 'dynometric (or power-measuring) check', an instrument invented by Prony, and lately improved by M. de Saint Leger, mining engineer at Rouen, for the purpose of measuring with accuracy the power of steam-engines and the quantity of fuel they consume. A large party of members of the Institute and Chamber of Deputies, of professors, engineers, etc., were present at the investigation. The object of the experiments was to ascertain the practical exactness of the apparatus, and for this purpose a steam engine of twelve horse-power of M. Pauweis's manufacture was made use of. The result appeared to be perfectly satisfactory and the scientific world now waits, with some interest, the report of the Committee of the Institute."

Baron de Prony (1755-1839) the inventor of the friction dynamometer, was distinguished both as a mathematician and engineer. He was trained under Perronet at the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées and himself in 1799 became the director of the school. During the Revolution he directed the preparation of an enormous series of logarithmic tables computed to fourteen, nineteen and twenty-five places of decimals, and under Napoleon superintended the operations in connexion with the regulations of the waters of the River Po, and the draining of the Pontine Marshes.

## Societies and Academies

### Paris

Academy of Sciences, February 22 (*C.R.*, 204, 533-624).

HENRI LAGATU and LOUIS MAUME: The possibility of measuring separately, at any period of growth, the feeding effect and improving effect of an application of manure. The method is based on the analysis of a leaf removed from the plant at regular intervals.

ÉDOUARD CHATTON and MME. SIMONE VILLENEUVE: The division of the mouth and the formation of the peristome in *Cyclochaeta astropectinis*. Their immediate genetic continuity.

RENÉ GARNIER: Two classical theorems of conformal geometry.

D. MANGERON: Certain problems at the polygonal boundary not totally characteristic for a class of partial differential equations of higher order.

M. LUNTZ: Alternating thermoconvective vortices in a thin layer.

DOUCHEAN AVSEC: Thermoconvective vortices in superposed layers.

ALBERT TOUSSAINT and SIMON STRIJEVSKY: The envelope curves of the yield for the best propelling screws.

SVETOPOLK PIVKO: The flow of air in the plane of rotation of a supporting helix.

RENÉ RETEL: Supplying fuel to a motor with combustion at constant pressure.

ASSÈNE DATZEFF: The passage of corpuscles through potential barriers.

BERNARD KWAL: The classical dynamics of the electron. Theory of prime functions and the true moment of the electron.

PIERRE VERNOTTE: The simultaneous determination of the specific heat and the thermal conductivity of insulators. Method of the signal.

JEAN TERRIEN: Stimulation of the CuCl bands by fluorescence in the vapour of cuprous chloride.