

University Events

BELFAST.—In connexion with the annual meeting of the British Medical Association recently held in Belfast, the following honorary degrees have been conferred: *doctor of laws*: Dr. G. C. Anderson, medical secretary of the British Medical Association; Sir E. Farquhar Buzzard, professor of medicine in the University of Oxford, physician to His Majesty the King, and president of the British Medical Association; Dr. H. Morley Fletcher, consulting physician at St. Bartholomew's Hospital and former president of the Association of Physicians; Prof. E. W. H. Groves, emeritus professor of surgery of the University of Bristol: *doctor of science*: Prof. S. P. Bedson, professor of bacteriology in the University of London; Dr. A. Felix, of the Lister Institute, known for his researches on typhus and enteric fevers.

CAMBRIDGE.—The Frank Smart studentship in botany will be vacant on October 1, 1937. Any graduate of the University is eligible for the studentship, which is valued at £210 a year. Further information can be obtained from Prof. F. T. Brooks, at the Botany School.

The Benn W. Levy research studentship in biochemistry will become vacant on October 1. Applications for its tenure should be addressed to Sir F. Gowland Hopkins at the School of Biochemistry before July 24.

LEEDS.—The Clive Behrens lectureship has been instituted by means of an endowment of £1,000 given by the Hon. Mrs. Behrens. The lecturer will be appointed biennially to give a series of four, five or six lectures on a subject germane, and of importance, to the practice of agriculture.

LONDON.—Mr. A. A. Miles has been appointed, as from October 1, to the University chair of bacteriology tenable at the University College Hospital Medical School. Since 1934 he has been University reader in bacteriology at the British Postgraduate Medical School.

Prof. J. H. Dible has been appointed, as from October 1, to the University chair of pathology tenable at the British Postgraduate Medical School. Since 1929 he has held the George Holt chair of pathology in the University of Liverpool.

OXFORD.—E. H. Leach, Oriel College, has been appointed to the new lectureship in physiology on the foundation of William Hulme at Brasenose College.

M. S. Wills, University College, has been awarded the Scott scholarship in physics for two years from October 1.

F. G. W. Knowles, Oriel College, has been elected to the Naples biological scholarship for the year 1937–8.

F. Fulton, Pembroke College, has been awarded the Radcliffe scholarship in pharmacology.

A special number of the *University Gazette* has been issued containing notices of the scholarships and exhibitions announced for the year 1937–8 by the men's colleges. In all, there are about 210 scholarships and 105 exhibitions open for competition. Of these, 37 and 16 are to be awarded for natural science, 13 and 6 for mathematics, 6 and 2 for either natural science or mathematics, and 8 and 5 for any of five subjects of which natural science and mathematics are two.

Science News a Century Ago

A Fatal Parachute Descent

IN Airy's "Autobiography" in the notes on the events of 1837 is one stating, "On July 24th I saw the descent of the parachute by which Mr. Cocking was killed. I attended the coroner's inquest and gave evidence a few days later". Robert Cocking was a landscape painter, who in his earlier days had been a member of the City Philosophical Society with which Faraday was connected. In August 1814, he had lectured to the Society on aeronautics and had received a medal from the Society of Arts. In 1837 he made a curious form of parachute like an inverted truncated cone, 34 ft. in diameter at the top, which was formed of a circular metal tube 2 in. in diameter. A wooden hoop 3–4 ft. in diameter formed the lower edge, and between the hoop and tube was stretched strong linen. It weighed about 150 lb. Being most anxious to try it, he prevailed upon Green, an aeronaut, to ascend in a balloon from the Vauxhall Gardens on the evening of July 24, with Cocking and his parachute suspended beneath the balloon. Having travelled as far as Lee, Cocking released himself, the parachute collapsed and he was killed.

The inquest was held at the Tiger's Head, Lee, and attracted a great deal of notice. Airy had watched the balloon through a telescope, and he and other scientific men gave evidence at the inquest. Green, in his evidence, said that he had an unconquerable objection to parachutes which he considered quite useless and not likely to lead to any good end. In the course of the inquest, Faraday's name was mentioned as having spoken with Cocking at the Gardens before the ascent, and on July 31, Faraday wrote a letter to *The Times* in which he referred to the lecture of Cocking, and his recollection of the inventor's "companionship, abilities and kindness". The verdict at the inquest was that, "We find that the deceased Robert Cocking, came to his death casually and by misfortune, in consequence of severe injuries received by a fall out of a parachute of his own invention and contrivance, which had been appended to a balloon; and we further find that the parachute did move to his death, and therefore that such parachute ought to become a deadend, and forfeited to the Queen". Cocking, who was sixty-one years of age, was buried in a grave next to that of Halley and Pond at Lee.

Telegraphic Communication on Railways

WHEN Wheatstone and Cooke patented their electric telegraph, Robert Stephenson and the directors of the London and Birmingham Railway sanctioned the laying of wires between the Euston Square and Camden Town stations. Towards the end of July 1837, the telegraph was ready and Dr. Andrew Wynter in his "Curiosities of Civilisation" said: "Late in the evening of the 25th of that month, in a dingy little room near the booking-office at Euston Square, by the light of a flaring dip-candle, which only illuminated the surrounding darkness, sat the inventor, with a beating pulse, and a heart full of hope. In an equally small room at the Camden Town station, where the wires terminated, sat Mr. Cooke, his co-patentee, and among others, two witnesses well known to fame—Mr. Charles Fox and Mr. Stephenson. . . . Mr. Cooke in his turn touched the keys and returned the answer. 'Never did I feel

such a tumultuous sensation before,' said the Professor, 'as when all alone in the still room I heard the needles click; and as I spelled the words, I felt all the magnitude of the invention, now proved to be practical beyond cavil or dispute.' The telegraph thenceforward, as far as its mechanism was concerned, went on without a check, and the modifications of the instrument, which is still in use, have been made for the purpose of rendering it more economical in its construction and working, two wires at present being employed, and in some cases only one."

Artificial Digestion

THE *British and Foreign Medical Review* of July 1837 contains the following information: "Dr. T. J. Todd of Brighton with the assistance of Mr. Schweitzer of the German Spa, Brighton, has been performing experiments with the artificial digestive fluid, in imitation of those of Schwann in Berlin and has arrived at some new and interesting results not attained by Dr. Schwann. The digestive fluids with which Dr. Todd operated were prepared from the stomachs of the ox, the horse, the dog and the cat. Some, also, prepared from the upper portion of the small intestines, was found not less powerful. The presence of the acid is essentially necessary in the preparation; when Mr. Schweitzer endeavoured to procure the digestive fluid with distilled water alone, or when he treated the mucous membrane in the same way with a weak alkaline solution, a rapid putridity stopped all further proceedings. Various animal and vegetable substances were submitted to the action of these digestive fluids, at the ordinary temperature of the atmosphere, and the contact result in all the instances had been that these substances have been resolved into their elementary organic globules."

"There has been no exception to this, so far as the experiments have extended, and these include among vegetable substances the artificial digestion of boiled cauliflower, of bread, and of vermicelli, not dressed; and among animal substances, the white of egg boiled, the coagulation of blood, butter, fat, the muscular fibre of mutton and of fish boiled and raw, filaments of the sciatic nerves raw, and scrapings of bone. The products of these artificial digestions especially of the vegetable substances compared with chyme taken from a dog which had been feeding upon ground oats, were very much alike, except that the watery part had been removed from the chyme."

Cure for Drunkenness

THE issue of the *Indian Journal of Medical and Physical Science* of July 1837 contains the following information: "A native of Norway, aged 40, who had from his youth been accustomed to dram drinking, was attacked with delirium tremens. His medical attendant to cure him of his dangerous propensity, prescribed the daily dose of a mixture of two drachms of sulphuric acid and twenty-four ounces of whisky. The result was remarkable. In three months' time he got such a dislike to all kinds of spirituous liquors that he could not bear to swallow a drop of anything stronger than beer. The dose of the above mixture taken, was four wine-glasses daily, and the cure had been of a year's standing at the time of the communication of the case."

Societies and Academies

Dublin

Royal Irish Academy, May 10.

W. J. MCCALLIEN: Structure of the Rathmullen District, Co. Donegal. An account is given of the Crana quartzite in the district between Rathmullen and Milford. It can be split into three divisions. The structure of the quartzite group is described, and emphasis is laid on the value of the epidiorite sills in the interpretation of the structure. The base of the quartzite is believed to be a slide, which is folded and overfolded. The Killygarvan limestone, which is younger than the Crana quartzite, is correlated with the Culdaff limestone.

Cape Town

Royal Society of South Africa, April 21.

Archæology of the Oakhurst Shelter, George.
(1) A. J. H. Goodwin: Course of the excavation. A description of general methods of excavation, stratigraphy, and cultural remains as observed on six visits to the Oakhurst Shelter. (2) Disposition of skeletal material. An account of the graves, their cultural age and associations, positions of burial and grave furniture. (3) M. R. Drennan: The cave-dwellers. An anthropometrical and descriptive account of the adult population of the shelter. (4) Children of the cave-dwellers. An anthropometrical account of the child population of the shelter, stressing growth and development in relation to the adult group. (5) J. F. Schofield: The pottery. An account of the pottery found in the superficial deposits at Oakhurst shelter.

P. W. LAIDLER: An unusual grooved stone.

J. F. SCHOFIELD: Pottery from the Umgazana and Zigzag caves.

Cracow

Polish Academy of Science and Letters, April 5.

TH. BANACHIEWICZ: The inverse of a Cracovian, and a general solution of a system of linear equations.

W. JACYNA: The differences in the indications of gas thermometers. A helium thermometer at constant pressure gives higher readings than a helium thermometer with the gas at constant volume if the temperature is higher than -100°C .

F. GORSKI: The polarimetric titration of the oxyacids. The author adds an excess of ammonium molybdate, to increase the rotatory power, and titrates with a standard solution of the optical isomer of opposite sign. Errors due to various secondary factors are thus eliminated.

MME. H. KRZEMIENIEWSKA and S. KRZEMIENIEWSKI:
(1) The Myxobacteria—cellulose-degrading agents. Description of Myxobacteria, especially the family Sorangiaceæ, capable of living on cellulose in the presence of free oxygen. These bacteria can be grown on a synthetic medium containing cellulose and nitrates.
(2) The degradation of cellulose by the Myxobacteria.

J. BADIAN: The cytology of yeasts.

W. NIESIOŁOWSKI and R. WOJTUSIAK: The geographical extension of forms of the species *Erebria manto*, especially in the eastern Carpathians.

J. ZACWILICHOWSKI: Experimental researches on the behaviour of acquired characters in the descendants of *Lymantria dispar*.

B. HRYNIEWIECKI: Count Michel-Jérôme Leszczycki-Suminski, and his study of the development of ferns.