

Science News a Century Ago

Instructions for Travellers

In the *Athenæum* of November 11, 1837, a note said: "In the instructions drawn up by the scientific men of France, for the use of the two vessels, the *Astrolabe* and the *Gelée*, which are about to circumnavigate the globe, we perceive that Mr. Ward's plan of transporting plants is highly recommended, as well as that of Mr. Luschmuth, which can also be applied to seeds, in order to preserve their germinating powers. M. de Blainville eagerly requires microscopic marine animals, the *Spirula* with its inhabitant, that of the *Nautilus flammeæ*, which is wanting in the collections in France, parasitical insects and worms; and strongly urges experiments to be made on the temperature of living man, and beings of an inferior order, under different circumstances. . . . He sets forth the important novelties likely to be found in New Guinea, the Moluccas, and Celebes, in the creeks and bays of which probably exist a multitude of fishes and Mollusca, and particularly requests the acquisition of the Apterya, from the New Holland region, which is supposed not to have any wings. . . . M. de Freycinet recommends hydrography, observations of the tides and currents, such descriptions of the countries visited as will set forth their resources to future navigation . . . and M. Corder states the ignorance which prevails concerning the southern hemisphere, and the consequent value of the smallest atom of rock from this quarter."

Hybrid Ferns

In the *Athenæum* of November 11, 1837, it is stated that "A triumph has been obtained by M. Martens, the professor of chemistry at the University of Louvain, and Dr. l'Herminier, over those who assert that no hybrid plant can be produced where no stamina exist. The former shook the fronds of the *Gymnogramma calomelanos*, and the *G. chrysophylla*, reciprocally over each other, at the time when the fructification was fully developed, and thus produced a new plant which is to be called *G. Martensii*. It is worthy of remark that the hybrid plant bids fair to be easily propagated in our greenhouses, while the parents constantly languish and die. While M. Martens was making his experiments at Louvain in Belgium, Dr. l'Herminier watched the same process taking place naturally in the woods and savannahs of Guadaloupe, and sent some dried fronds (in excellent preservation) of the hybrid to M. Bory St. Vincent."

The Moon's Equatorial Horizontal Parallax

ON November 11, 1837, Thomas Henderson, Astronomer Royal for Scotland, read a paper to the Royal Astronomical Society entitled "The Constant Quantity of the Moon's Equatorial Horizontal Parallax, deduced from Observations made at Greenwich, Cambridge and The Cape of Good Hope in 1832 and 1833." Previous to this, by using a method based on the theory of gravity, Burchardt had found that the constant part of the lunar parallax under the equator amounted to 57' 0" while Damoiseau arrived at 57' 0.9" for the constant and Plana computed it at 57' 3.1". By another method founded on observations made simultaneously at different parts of the earth, Lacaille had obtained 57' 4.6", Lalande 57' 3.7" and Du Séjour 57' 6.0". While at the Cape

in 1832-33, Henderson determined a great number of declinations of the moon with the view of arriving at a more accurate value of this element, and by a comparison with his own observations made at Greenwich and Cambridge, obtained 57' 1.8" for the constant of the equatorial parallax.

Observations on Rain

THE issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine* of November 1837, contains the following account of a paper recently communicated at a meeting of the Warwickshire Natural History and Archæological Society: "The Rev. G. Childe made public his observations on Rain. He said it was a general but erroneous opinion that the greatest quantity of rain that fell in any month of the year fell in February. From his own observations (during eight or more years) he ascertained that in July was the greatest quantity, September second, August third, October fourth, June fifth, April sixth, November seventh, May eighth, February ninth, instead of first, December tenth, January eleventh and March twelfth. It would be found that if there were a deficiency of rain in the winter months December, January and February, that deficiency would be in great part compensated by an excess in the three summer months July, August and September."

University Events

CAMBRIDGE.—Dr. H. Brück, of the University of Berlin, has been appointed first junior observer in the Solar Physics Observatory.

W. G. Palmer, of St. John's College, has been approved for the degree of doctor of science.

It is proposed to confer the degree of M.A. on Dr. D. G. Catcheside, University lecturer in botany, and S. D. Elliott, University demonstrator in the Department of Pathology.

Miss M. L. Tomlinson has been elected to a staff fellowship at Girton College.

OXFORD.—On November 2 in Congregation the degree of M.A. by decree was conferred on Lord Nuffield, so that he is now a full and voting member of the University.

On November 16 the Chancellor will preside at the Congregation at which Lord Nuffield will be thanked for his recent gifts. There will then be voting on the decrees relating to the new benefaction to the medical school and promulgation of the statute relating to the gifts to the proposed Nuffield College (see p. 799) and the chemistry school.

Dr. L. J. Witts has been appointed Nuffield professor of clinical medicine as from 1938.

H. J. B. Atkins, Trinity College, R. B. Scott, Brasenose College, A. W. D. Leishman, University College, and E. P. Edmonds, Keble College, have been granted the degree of M.D.

J. G. Daunt, Exeter College, has been awarded the Scott scholarship for research in physics.

The curators of the University Chest have been authorized to receive from the Rockefeller Foundation in the year beginning October 1, 1937, a sum not exceeding 3,000 dollars as a contribution towards scientific apparatus, material and special cages for primates required for research in the Department of Human Anatomy.