Science News a Century Ago

Human Temperature in Different Climates

AT a meeting of the Academy of Sciences on April 9, 1838, reported in the *Gazette Médicale de Paris* of April 21, MM. Eydoux and Souleyet reported their observations on the men belonging to the crew of the *Bonite* of different ages and temperaments but always leading the same kind of life and engaged in much the same kind of occupations. Their observations were carried on every day at the same time (3 p.m.) from their arrival at Rio de Janeiro until their return to France. These observations, which amounted to more than a thousand, showed that human temperature rises and falls at the same time as the external temperature, though much less rapidly, as it is easy to imagine. It falls rather slowly on passing from a hot to a cold country, but after leaving a cold region for a tropical one it rises much more rapidly. This upward or downward movement is more or less marked according to the individual, but the extremes are fairly close to one another, and the average of the differences observed in the temperature of the human body for a difference of 40° C. in the temperature of the external air was only about a degree in the men under observation.

The Royal Astronomical Society

AT a meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society on April 13, 1838, several communications were made. The first of these was "On the Correction of the Mean Distance, Eccentricity, Epoch and Longitude of the Aphelion of the Orbit of Venus, by Errors of Heliocentric Longitude derived from the Cambridge Observations of the Years 1833, 1834 and 1835 and the Greenwich Observations of 1836". The author of this paper was the Rev. Robert Main (1808–78) who had become chief assistant at Greenwich in 1835 and was afterwards Radcliffe observer at Oxford.

Another paper, entitled "Times of Emerson of the first and second Satellites of Jupiter observed at Greenwich Hospital School, April 9, 1838", was by Edward Riddle (1788–1854) who was mathematical master at the School from 1821 until 1851. "These phenomena," said Riddle, "deserve notice and are here recorded, merely from their happening within so short a time of each other, and from their having been observed earlier in the evening than the superintendent of the *Nautical Almanac* anticipated that they could be seen with advantage in this neighbourhood."

German Scientific Periodicals

THE editor of the *Athenæum* had apparently asked a correspondent in Germany to give a review of the progress of art and science in that country, and accordingly a communication was sent from Dresden which was printed in the journal on April 14, 1838. "Your wishes", the writer began, "are easier expressed than complied with; however, I will do my best to give you a sketch of the intellectual world of Germany. . . . In no part of Europe is the number of periodicals devoted to science, art and literature, so great as in Germany. . . . In the scientific and medical journals, of which about eighty exist in Germany (forty-one being exclusively devoted to physiology and medicine) many subjects of importance are under consideration and discussion. Animal magnetism, somnambulism, and even the histories of people possessed with devils occupy many pens . . . the works on animal magnetism, which have lately appeared from the pens of Professor Hensler and Dr. Bork . . . are reviewed in Gersdorf's Repetorium and other journals. Dr. Bork asserts that during the last nine years he has cured no less than two thousand diseases through the influence of animal magnetism. In the writings of two other medical men, the greater number of illnesses, particularly of married people, are attributed to disharmony in the magnetic influences; and however absurd such opinions may be thought in England, it is beyond question that many educated Germans have faith in them. . . . Another therapeutic novelty . . . is the *cold water* system. . . . The press is continually producing works advocating cold water, internally and externally, as the grand remedy for all disorders."

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"A periodical of somewhat higher pretensions than any of the preceding is the 'German Quarterly' just published by Cotta, of Stuttgart. . . . This work is to occupy new ground, and supply a void long felt to exist. A point of union was wanting in Germany, where new discoveries and their practical utility . . . could be immediately discussed and appreciated, by men of all parties, distinguished for science and general attainments. Germany may boast of a conscientious cultivation of the sciences and of its honorable acknowledgement of the merits of foreigners; but many first rate men have often been thrown back on themselves, or confined to a narrow circle, though capable of imparting valuable information to society, from the want of such a work. . . . No man can find time to hunt after all that he may desire to be informed of, if scattered abroad in numberless periodicals; and few public libraries, much less individuals, have even the means at command to purchase all that are published. And yet the basis of knowledge is wasted, and the capacity to appreciate it greater, in Germany than in the surrounding countries. The German Quarterly is intended to collect together whatever is best and most important in all branches of knowledge, that they may gain general appreciation and be brought home as far as possible to the business and bosoms of men in our everyday life. . . ."

A Life-Saving Rocket Apparatus

THE *Mechanics' Magazine* of April 14, 1838, quoting from the *Silurian*, said: "A Mr. Gyngell made experiments on the Green near Brecon, with some rockets of his invention for communicating with stranded vessels. He discharged several rockets of different weights. The rope was coiled on a cone formed of light rails of wood, and was carried out the distance of from 3 to 5 hundred yards according to the size of the rocket attached to it. . . . Mr. Boyers, of Swansea, in a letter on this subject that we inserted a few weeks since, remarks that if rockets could have been obtained at the time of the wreck of the Killarney steamer, a number of lives might have been saved and the survivors would have been delivered from their dreadful sufferings. . . . It is very seldom that an instance occurs of a vessel striking on a lee shore a greater distance than a quarter of a mile from the land. We need hardly point out the utility of the rocket in such cases, and we hope ere long no vessel will leave port without being provided with this simple and cheap apparatus."