

## SCIENCE NEWS A CENTURY AGO

Davies Gilbert, F.R.S., 1769-1839

ON December 24, 1839, Davies Gilbert, president of the Royal Society from November 6, 1827 to November 30, 1830, died at Eastbourne at the age of seventy-two. Gilbert was born on March 6, 1769, at Tredrea, in the parish of St. Erth, Cornwall, his father being the Rev. Edward Giddy, curate of that place, who had married an heiress of considerable property. Educated at first by his father, he afterwards attended schools at Penzance and Bristol and in 1785 became a gentleman-commoner of Pembroke College, Oxford. He had already devoted much study to the physical sciences, and he became known as "the Cornish philosopher". In 1791, at the early age of twenty-four, he was elected F.R.S. Being free to follow his own inclinations, he left Oxford in 1793 and returned to Cornwall, acting as sheriff, dividing his time between his magisterial duties and the cultivation of science and literature, and was the friend and correspondent of Beddoes, Davy, Hitchens, Hellins, Trevithick and Hornblower. In 1804, a new sphere of activities opened for him by his election as M.P. for Helston. Two years later he was elected to represent Bodmin and he continued to sit for that borough until December 1832. "He was," says Wild, "emphatically the representative of scientific interests in the House of Commons, and contributed by his exertions to carry many very important objects. Indeed, he was continually called on to serve on committees of inquiry touching scientific and financial questions." In 1808 he married Mary Ann Gilbert, only niece of Charles Gilbert of Eastbourne and then assumed the name and arms of Gilbert.

Gilbert had a wide range of interests. He contributed papers to the *Philosophical Transactions*, and the *Quarterly Journal of Science and Arts*, was a collector of traditions, songs and carols of Cornwall, and in 1838 published "The Parochial History of Cornwall". From 1814 until his death he was president of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall. He calculated for Telford the lengths of the chains for the Menai Straits Suspension Bridge, selected Brunel's design for the Clifton Suspension Bridge, suggested the founding of an observatory at the Cape of Good Hope, was chairman of the committee for rebuilding London Bridge, and was an advocate for the construction of Plymouth Breakwater.

J. D. Forbes, Baden Powell and Melloni

WRITING from Edinburgh on December 27, 1839, to Prof. Baden Powell, J. D. Forbes said: "I own that I should be very glad to see a good synopsis of what has been done during the last eight years, well aware that, so far as my own contributions are concerned, they were published in a form repulsive to the generality of readers, and even to many men of science who would willingly glean from your critical pages how much has been established, and on what kind of evidence, without troubling themselves about details. . . ."

"I hope that you will not treat Melloni's papers so slightly as you propose. His earlier ones are full of interesting and original experiments. So far as I am concerned, I have nothing to wish but that everything Melloni has done should be fully and accurately known, for by a rare good fortune there is not a single debate in point of priority between us, and every experiment we have in common, with

a single exception—the variable polarizability—confirms each other's results. It is for you as a critic to judge how far, if in any case my right conclusions were founded on false grounds, for this is the sum of Melloni's captious criticisms."

## APPOINTMENTS VACANT

APPLICATIONS are invited for the following appointments on or before the dates mentioned:

ASSISTANT LECTURERS IN AGRICULTURE at the Essex Institute of Agriculture, Writtle—The Clerk to the Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford (December 30).

HEADMASTERSHIP OF THE HEREFORD CATHEDRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL—The Clerks to the Governors, A. D. Steel and Son, 30 Castle Street, Hereford (January 13).

LECTURER IN ENGINEERING—The Principal, Dudley and Staffordshire Technical College, The Broadway, Dudley.

SECTION ENGINEER for the Nigerian Government Railway—The Crown Agents for the Colonies, 4 Millbank, S.W.1 (quoting M/9071).

ASSISTANT ENGINEER in the Chief Engineer's Department of the River Great Ouse Catchment Board—The Chief Engineer, River Great Ouse Catchment Board, Brooksland Avenue, Cambridge.

## REPORTS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

(not included in the monthly Books Supplement)

## Great Britain and Ireland

National Physical Laboratory. Abstracts of Papers published in the Year 1938. Pp. iii+63. (London: H.M. Stationery Office.) 1s. net. [2911]

## Other Countries

Memoirs of the India Meteorological Department. Vol. 26, Part 10: The General Circulation of the Atmosphere over India and its Neighbourhood. By K. R. Ramanathan and K. P. Ramakrishnan. Pp. ii+189-246+74 plates. (Delhi: Manager of Publications.) 10s. rupees; 16s. 6d. [2211]

Malnutrition in South Africa. By Dr. Ellen M. Radloff and Dr. T. W. B. Osborn. Pp. ii+34. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.) 2s. [2311]

Report of the Administration of the British East African Meteorological Service for the Year 1938. Pp. 52. (Nairobi: British East African Meteorological Service.) [2411]

Cornell University: Agricultural Experiment Station. Bulletin 716: Relation of Market Quality to the Price Received for Long Island Cauliflower. By John D. Hartman. Pp. 36. Bulletin 717: Apple Orchards; Cost of Developing, Values and Financial Returns. By G. P. Scoville. Pp. 44. Bulletin 718: Downy Mildew of Spinach and its Control. By Mathias C. Richards. Pp. 30. Bulletin 719: Relation of Size of Cow to Production and Cost of Production of Milk on 94 Grade A Farms in the Tully-Homer Area. By E. G. Misner. Pp. 26. Bulletin 720: An Economic Study of Land Utilization in Chautauqua County, New York. By Alexander Joss. Pp. 52. Bulletin 721: An Economic Study of Fruit and Vegetable Wholesaling and Jobbing Firms in New York City. By T. N. Gearreald. Pp. 68. Bulletin 722: Soybeans as a Source of Fat in the Dairy Ration. By L. A. Maynard, Karl E. Gardner and Adrian Hodson. Pp. 30. Memoir 225: The Culinary Quality of Apples as determined by the use of New York State Varieties. By Marion C. Pfund. Pp. 74. Memoir 226: Some Comparisons between Analyses of Narrative and Film Records of Behavior and Guidance of Children. By Ethel B. Waring, Frances Markey Dwyer and Elsie Junkin. Pp. 50. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University.) [2711]

The Grasslands of the Falkland Islands. By William Davies. Pp. x+86+18 plates. (Stanley: Government Printer; London: Crown Agents for the Colonies.) 5s. [2711]

Mitteilungen der Sternwarte Budapest-Svábhégy. Nr. 8: Untersuchungen über die Perioden- und Lichtkurvenänderungen von Kurzperiodischen 5 Cephei Sternen, 2, Ar Herculis. Von Julia Balázs und L. Detre. Pp. 49. (Budapest: Sternwarte Budapest-Svábhégy.) [2711]

Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India. Palaeontologia Sinica, New Series, Vol. 26, Memoir No. 1: The Fossil Bovidae of India. By Dr. Guy E. Pilgrim. Pp. viii+356+8 plates. 15.4 rupees; 23s. 6d. Palaeontologia Sinica, New Series, Vol. 23, Memoir No. 1: Fossil Fauna from the Tertiary of Garo Hills, Assam. By P. N. Mukerjee. Pp. viii+104+3 plates. 4.14 rupees; 7s. 9d. (Calcutta: Geological Survey of India.) [2911]

## Catalogues, etc.

Phytoferol: a Standardised Solution of Vitamin E. Pp. 14. (London: The British Drug Houses, Ltd.)

The Wild-Barfield Heat-Treatment Journal. Vol. 3, No. 22, September 1939. Pp. 65-78+iv. (London: Wild-Barfield Electric Furnaces, Ltd.)

Old Science and Medicine. (Catalogue 53.) Pp. 43. (London: E. P. Goldschmidt and Co., Ltd.)

Calendar for 1940. (London: Evershed and Vignoles, Ltd.)

Calendar for 1940. (Newcastle-on-Tyne: C. A. Parsons and Co., Ltd.)