

The Royal Military Academy

APART from the universities and Gresham College, the Royal Military Academy is perhaps the oldest of our institutions, with a long line of notable mathematicians. Woolwich became a naval station as long ago as the time of Henry VIII, and in the reign of Charles II a military depot was established there. In 1741, two hundred years ago, the Academy was founded for the education of cadets, with the German mathematician, John Muller (1699–1784), as headmaster. Two years later, Thomas Simpson (1710–61), who had taught mathematics while working as a weaver in Spitalfields and had published a work on fluxions, was made the professor of mathematics, holding that position until his death. He was a fellow of the Royal Society and a member of the Academy of Sciences, Stockholm. Like Gregory, he edited the "Ladies' Diary", as also did Charles Hutton (1737–1823), the self-taught Newcastle schoolmaster who was appointed to the mathematical chair in 1773. Hutton published many valuable works, and became Copley medallist and foreign secretary of the Royal Society. During the professorships of Hutton and Gregory the staff included for longer or shorter periods John Bonnycastle (1750?–1824), the Rev. Lewis Evans (1755–1827), and his son, Thomas Simpson Evans (1777–1818), and Peter Barlow (1776–1862), who from an obscure mercantile situation raised himself to the front rank of physical investigators. Since the days of these worthies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Royal Military Academy has had among its professors of mathematics many distinguished men, including Samuel Hunter Christie and Sir George Greenhill.

Alexis-Marie Rochon (1741–1817)

AMONG the less well known of the remarkable group of French men of science who lived through the Revolutionary period was Alexis-Marie Rochon, astronomer, physicist and mechanic, who was born at Brest on February 21, 1741, and died on April 5, 1817. Three years before his death, in August 1814, when Napoleon was an exile in Elba and Wellington was the British ambassador in Paris, Brewster, then aged thirty-two, visited Rochon in Paris, and in his diary for August 22 recorded, "I went this morning to call upon M. Rochon... a venerable and intelligent old man of seventy-three, who is well known to philosophers by his scientific works and inventions. He showed me his prismatic micrometer, a small instrument, with a level for measuring the inclination of lines to the horizon by the coincidence of two images, and his method of doubling the double refraction of Iceland crystal by extinguishing two of the images and employing two that are most remote. . . ."

Brewster and Rochon had much to talk about in optics, but optics was only one of the subjects to which Rochon had made contributions. He had been astronomer-optician to the Marine, had made voyages to Morocco and the Indian Ocean, at Brest he had been librarian to the Royal Marine Academy,

keeper of a cabinet of philosophical instruments, the head of a workshop and the first director of the observatory founded at his suggestion. He had made improvements in telescopes, in the wire gauze used in ships' lanterns, and had written on the distillation of sea-water and many other subjects. A member of the old Royal Academy of Sciences, suppressed in 1793, he had been given a seat in 1795 in the newly founded National Institute, and had had a share in the introduction of the new weights and measures, and coinage. When after a long and useful career he died, his seat in the Institute passed to Fourier, and his *éloge* was pronounced by Delambre.

Announcements

SIR ARTHUR KEITH has been elected an honorary member of the New York Academy of Sciences.

DR. A. B. WALKOM, secretary of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, has been appointed director of the Australian Museum.

CANADA is setting up a blood "bank" to provide transfusions for 20,000 military and civilian casualties.

THE New South Wales Health Department proposes to appeal for at least 10,000 residents of both sexes between the ages of eighteen and sixty to participate in a blood-transfusion scheme to provide a twenty-four-hour service of blood donors to hospitals and doctors and a supply of blood for transfusions in any emergency.

ACCORDING to the Director of the Census, the population of the United States has increased by 8,634,835 since ten years ago, and is now 131,409,881. This increase is the smallest for any decade since 1790 when the first census was taken. It represents a 7 per cent increase in the population as compared with one of 16.1 per cent between 1920 and 1930, and one of 14.9 per cent between 1910 and 1920. The reasons given for this falling off are (1) a decline in the birth-rate and (2) the virtual stoppage of immigration.

THE following appointments in the Colonial Service have recently been made: J. Gordon, assistant conservator of forests, Gold Coast; R. G. Morgan, assistant conservator of forests, Gold Coast; T. I. Rees, assistant conservator of forests, Nigeria; Dr. H. F. Birch, assistant agricultural chemist, Jamaica; M. Park (plant pathologist), divisional and research staff officer, Ceylon.

IN NATURE of February 1, p. 144, the *Athenæum* was mentioned with the *Gardeners' Chronicle* and *Punch* as having been founded in 1841. This is incorrect. The *Athenæum* was founded in 1828, and Wentworth Dilke, one of the group concerned with establishing the other two journals, was editor during the period 1830–46.