

has raised the building fund to over \$300,000, and it is probable that work will be begun on one wing of the structure this summer.

At the recent *Conversazione* of the Royal Society, according to the report in the *London Times*, Prof. Roberts-Austen showed several curious experiments, which are modifications of one recently described by Margot, of Geneva. A fine wire of aluminium is heated to no less than 400 degrees above its melting point, but the wire, nevertheless, remains intact. This is owing to the formation of a fine film of alumina on the surface of the wire, and the metal, being very light, does not run into globules, as it might be expected to do. The molten wire has, moreover, a current passing through it and will, if approached by a similar wire or by a magnet, enable all the effects of mobile conductors carrying currents to be illustrated. One experiment showed that the molten wire can even be twisted on itself without rupture, and the effects of a tenacious thread of molten metal moving in response to electrical influences are very singular.

M. MÉLINE, who is Minister of Agriculture as well as Premier of France, has directed the professors of agriculture to suspend their lectures and to go through the rural districts in order to advise farmers to meet the failure of the hay crop by sowing vetches, maize and other fodder, as also by utilizing oilcake, straw, bran and corn.

At a recent meeting of the British Astronomical Association, Dr. Gill, astronomer in charge of the Royal Observatory at the Cape of Good Hope, according to the report in the *London Times*, gave an account of the work in which he had been engaged. He mentioned first the completion of his investigation on the solar parallax and the mass of the moon, derived from observation of minor planets on a programme which he had prepared and which had been carried out at Newhaven, Leipsig, Göttingen and Bamberg, as well as at the Cape. The details of these results would be presented to the Congress of Directors of Nautical Ephemerides, which would assemble in Paris in May, and he would urge at that meeting the adoption of these constants for general use by astrono-

mers. Dr. Gill also stated that the work of the geodetic survey of South Africa, which he had directed since 1885, was completed and printed, and that the report would be presented to the Cape Parliament in May. The first volume of the Cape *Durchmusterung* had been passed through the press. The whole of the latter work would consist of three volumes containing the places and magnitudes of 450,000 stars between latitude 18 deg. south and South Pole; it would be complete as far as magnitude 9.3 or 9.4, and would contain most of the stars as far as the 10th magnitude. A fundamental star catalogue for the equinox, 1890, containing the results of the Cape transit circle observations during the past ten years, was far advanced towards completion. Dr. Gill also mentioned that Mr. M'Clean's splendid gift of a powerful equatorial would now divert his efforts more to the field of astrophysics.

THE Washington *Star* states that a large invoice of plants for the department of botany has just been received at the Catholic University from Rev. Father Langlois, of Louisiana. This is the third donation of the kind Father Langlois has made to the University this year. Dr. Greene will leave for California shortly to collect specimens for his herbarium.

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NEWS.

THE United States Senate has passed the bill to charter the National University.

THE trustees of the College of New Jersey at Princeton, commonly called Princeton College, have filed in the County Clerk's office a certificate changing the name of the institution to Princeton University.

At a meeting of about fifty friends of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, on May 26th, the sum of \$138,750 was subscribed toward meeting the deficit caused by the failure of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to pay dividends on its stock. It is hoped that \$50,000 a year for five years may be subscribed.

MT. HOLYOKE COLLEGE has received \$7,000 by the will of Miss Hitchcock, of Springfield.

THE twenty-fifth anniversary of President Angell's administration will be celebrated at the

University of Michigan on June 24th. Addresses will be made by Dr. W. T. Harris, U. S. Commissioner of Education, and Prof. J. O. Murray, of Princeton University.

THE University of Nebraska holds a summer school at Lincoln, from June 8th to July 3d, intended especially for teachers, principals and superintendents of the State. The courses of special interest to students of science are those offered in botany by Prof. Bessey and in physics by Prof. Brace. It is the intention of the University to offer next year courses in those subjects omitted this year. Thus, in 1897 zoölogy and chemistry will probably be offered in the place of botany and physics.

THE Board of Overseers of Harvard University have elected Theobald Smith, M. D., professor of comparative pathology; Charles Hubert Moore, A. M., professor of arts and director of the Fogg Art Museum; Lewis Jerome Johnson, A. B., C. E., assistant professor of civil engineering, and Comfort Avery Adams, Jr., S. B., assistant professor of electrical engineering.

OF the ten fellows nominated by the faculty of the University of Wisconsin only one is in the pure sciences—C. H. Bunting in biology.

PROF. W. WHITMAN BAILEY, of Brown University, has been appointed by President Cleveland, a member of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy at West Point, where, it will be remembered, his father was many years professor, and where he himself was born February 22, 1843.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

'PROGRESS IN AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY,
1886-95.'

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In the *American Naturalist* for May, of the present year, there appeared a contribution of mine entitled 'Progress in American Ornithology, 1886-95,' and in a recent issue of SCIENCE (No. 73, pp. 777-779) Dr. J. A. Allen has undertaken to reply to such parts of that article as he considers to be of a critical nature as applying to the Committee of the American Ornithologist's Union, which prepared the last edition of the 'Check List of North American Birds.' In the

present rejoinder I beg to assure my distinguished reviewer, at the outstart, that my article in the *American Naturalist* was not prompted through a spirit of 'animus,' as he seems to think, and that my 'reference to the startling clearly reveals that animus' is, surely, too ridiculous to be entertained even for a moment. Dr. Allen charges me with having overlooked 'the main purpose of the new Check List, which was the revision of the matter relating to the geographical distribution of the species and subspecies.' This omission was entirely intentional upon my part, and I preferred to leave it to other and more competent reviewers who have kept pace with that division of the subject during the last ten years, and who are for that reason far better prepared to deal with it than I am, who have not made any special attempt in that direction. That I did not refer to the matter of geographical distribution is any evidence that I underrated its value is, to say the least, a curious inference. Upon similar grounds I might have been charged with underrating the value of certain technicalities in scientific nomenclature, and of the necessity of typographical precision in the new 'Check List,' for I had nothing to say about them, and intentionally so. Other reviewers will doubtless turn their attention to such matters, and for the enlightenment of the A. O. U. Committee, and the consequent progress of American ornithology, point out the shortcomings in these premises likewise. Indeed, in *The Nidologist* for April of this year, a very good step has been taken in this direction. Through the assistance of the review to which I refer, I am prepared to say that I feel I have quite as much right to allow *Burrica* to appear in my article as *Barrica*, to which Dr. Allen has invited my attention, as he and the A. O. U. Committee have to spell 'probably' 'propably,' or Greenland with three e's, as they have in the new Check List (pp. 221 and 321).

Dr. Allen has at last given to avian taxonomers a reason, the reason perhaps, why the A. O. U. Committee adhere so persistently to the superantiquated classification of birds to be found in the last Check List. It is because 'the species are numbered in an orderly sequence' and 'of the still very unsettled state of the sub-