

organization, that of being governed by a head who is not an astronomer and who has no thread of law to guide him in his administration. Another unique feature, without parallel in the history of astronomical observatories, is the misfortunes with its instruments which we pointed out in our first issue of this year. Here our information was based wholly on the official reports, no weight being given to the possibility that the actual condition of the instruments may be a little worse than made known in the public statement. Is it possible to dissociate in the mind of the scientific public these two unique features?

We commend the reading of what Mr. Bigelow has said on the subject, though he is silent on its main points, and the grounds he takes are not at all clear to us. On one point he labors under a misapprehension. If he will re-read our article he will see that we made no charge against the administration in connection with the Magnetic Observatory, but only inquired how it happened that one of the finest magnetic observatories in existence was set-up in the immediate neighborhood of a trolley line, the electric current of which would necessarily be destructive to the results. Mr. Bigelow informs us, as a 'well-known' fact, that this was done by the united counsel of the astronomical director and a prominent visiting English astronomer and against the arguments of the professor in charge of the work, and all others in Washington interested in magnetic observations. He intimates that other interests than those of science prompted the proceedings. We are thankful for this statement, which, if correct and complete, will enable the reader to draw his own conclusions, but we do not know on what ground he says that the fact is 'well known.' It may be well known to those concerned, or to people in Washington generally, but we never before heard or read of it. We

may remind Mr. Bigelow that an unnamed 'visiting astronomer' cannot bear a heavy weight of responsibility, and we hope that he will allow this unfortunate counsellor to state his side of the case.

This summary of views, reasons and arguments, seems to exhaust the case in its present aspects, though we may need to return to it when Senator Morgan's bill and the naval appropriation bill are taken up by the Senate. The question is not of concern to astronomers only, but is probably the most important subject at present before American men of science.

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#### SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

M. FOUQUÉ, professor of mineralogy in the Collège de France, assumed the presidency of the Paris Academy of Sciences at the first meeting of the year on January 7th, succeeding M. Michel Lévy. M. Bouquet de la Grye was elected vice-president, and will consequently assume the presidency next year.

DR. GRABOWSKY, of the Natural History Museum at Brunswick, has been appointed director of the Zoological Gardens at Breslau.

MR. E. J. BUTLER, M.B., has been appointed by the Secretary of State for India, on the recommendation of the director of the Royal Gardens, Kew, to the post of official botanist to the Indian Government at a salary commencing at £600 per annum.

MR. WILLIAM WALLACE has resigned the position of superintendent of the building of the American Museum of Natural History.

*Terrestrial Magnetism* reports that Mr. James B. Baylor has now completed the magnetic survey of North Carolina, which has been carried out at the joint expense of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey and the North Carolina Geological Survey. The first report upon this work, prepared by Messrs. Baylor and Hazard, is ready for distribution.

THE British Institution of Mechanical Engineers has presented the first Willan's premium to Captain H. Riall Sankey.

LORD RALEIGH has been appointed chairman of a Board of Trade committee to consider the extent to which the working of the traffic on the Central London Railway produces vibration in the adjacent buildings, and what alterations in the conditions of such working or in structure can be devised to remedy the same.

PROFESSOR MANSFIELD MERRIMAN, head of the department of civil engineering, Lehigh University, has issued a circular letter to the County Commissioners throughout the State of Pennsylvania, offering on behalf of the University, to make, without expense to the Commissioners, tests of hydraulic cement to be used on public works. In the report of the results of these tests no opinion will be expressed on the value of the cements.

At the annual meeting of the Washington Academy of Sciences, on January 17, 1901, the following officers were elected:

Chas. D. Walcott, *President*.

W. H. Holmes, *Vice-President* for the Anthropological Society.

F. A. Lucas, *Vice-President* for the Biological Society.

V. K. Chestnut, *Vice-President* for the Chemical Society.

John A. Kasson, *Vice-President* for the Columbia Historical Society.

H. G. Dyar, *Vice-President* for the Entomological Society.

A. G. Bell, *Vice-President* for the Geographic Society.

G. K. Gilbert, *Vice-President* for the Geological Society.

S. C. Busey, *Vice-President* for the Medical Society.

J. Howard Gore, *Vice-President* for the Philosophical Society.

Frank Baker, *Secretary*.

Bernard R. Green, *Treasurer*.

*Managers*: Class 1902—L. O. Howard, J. W. Powell, Carroll D. Wright. Class 1903—F. W. Clarke, C. Hart Merriam, Whitman Cross. Class 1904—Marcus Baker, Geo. M. Sternberg, G. M. Kober.

THE Middleton Goldsmith Lecture for 1901, before the New York Pathological Society, will be delivered by Dr. Charles S. Minot on March 26th. The subject announced is 'The Embryological Basis of Pathology.' We learn that it is the lecturer's intention to discuss the general laws governing both the normal and pathological differentiation of cells.

THE Duke of the Abruzzi and Captain Cagni gave before the Italian Geographical Society, on January 14th, accounts of their recent Polar expedition. The King and Queen of Italy and a distinguished audience were present. The freedom of the City of Rome has been conferred on the Duke of the Abruzzi.

PROFESSOR FRANCIS H. HERRICK, of Western Reserve University, delivered an illustrated lecture before the Sigma Xi Society of Yale University on January 19th, on 'The Habits of Wild Birds.'

THE annual meeting of the Neurological Society of London was held on January 24th, when the presidential address was delivered by Dr. W. J. Mickle on 'Mental Wandering.'

PROFESSOR SILVANUS P. THOMPSON gave a lecture on January 10th, at the Urania, in Berlin, on 'Faraday and the English School of Electricians.'

THE Royal Geographical Society of Australasia has established a Thomson Foundation Medal in recognition of Mr. J. P. Thomson's great services to the Society, of which he is regarded as the founder, and which he has served in many capacities. The gold medal is to be awarded annually for the best original contribution to geographical literature, preference being given to the geography of Australasia.

THE annual meeting of the Geographical Association was held in London on January 9th, when Mr. Douglas W. Freshman was elected president and Mr. A. J. Herbertson, vice-president. The membership of the Association is now 134, representing 84 schools and colleges. Plans are being considered for the publication of a geographical journal for teachers of geography.

THE annual meeting of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution was held on January 23d. The following changes were announced in the membership of the Board: Hon. Richard Olney, to succeed Dr. William Preston Johnston, and Judge Gray of Delaware, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Dr. William L. Wilson. The vacancy in the executive committee, caused by the death of Dr. Wilson, was filled by the election of Representative

Hitt of Illinois. It was decided in view of the proposed abolition of the English cemetery at Genoa which contains the remains of James Smithson, the founder of the Institution, that the Secretary be requested to arrange with the authorities of some other cemetery, at Genoa, for the re-interment of Mr. Smithson's remains and the transfer of the original monument. It will be remembered that the Smithsonian Institution placed a tablet on Smithson's tomb and that it is properly cared for.

At a meeting held recently at Colchester it was decided to erect a marble statue of William Gilbert, whose great work, *De Magnete*, published just three hundred years ago, laid the foundation of electrical science. The statue, towards which £130 has been subscribed, is to occupy a niche in the façade of the new town hall of Colchester.

WE regret to learn of the death, at the age of sixty-six years, of Elisha Gray, which occurred on January 21st, from heart disease. Mr. Gray was the author of 'Experimental Researches in Electroharmonic Telegraphy and Telephony' and of 'Elementary Talks on Science,' and is well-known for his important inventions in telegraphy, telephony and electrical appliances.

COLONEL F. F. HILDER, chief clerk of the Bureau of American Ethnology, died of pneumonia at his home in Washington on January 21st, at the age of seventy-four years.

THE death is announced, at the age of thirty-eight years, of Mr. John Henry Leech, the English entomologist. He was the author of numerous works on this science including 'The Butterflies of China, Japan and Corea.' The collections made by him for this work are now partly in the South Kensington Natural History Museum. Mr. Leech was proprietor of *The Entomologist*.

WE also regret to learn from *Nature* that Mr. S. W. Egan, since 1868 connected with the Geological Survey of Ireland, died in Dublin on January 6th; and that Dr. Giulio Pachet, doctent in experimental physics in the University of Padua, has died at the age of thirty-three years.

THE will of Oswald Ottendorfer sets aside about \$200,000 for public bequests, including

\$25,000 to the American Museum of Natural History, \$20,000 to the Cooper Union for the advancement of science and art, and \$20,000 to the New York Free Circulating Library.

THROUGH the liberality of T. M. Baird, Jr., Esq., of Victoria, B. C., a tract of land on the coast of Vancouver Island, opposite Cape Flattery, has been presented for a seaside botanical station of the University of Minnesota. The erection of a group of log buildings has been begun, and a party of thirty or more botanists has been organized to open the work of the station next June.

HALF the educational staff of the Royal Engineering College at Coopers Hill has been summarily dismissed, for the purpose, as it is somewhat oddly stated, of 'reducing the present excessive cost of the staff and increasing the efficiency of the teaching.' The College at Coopers Hill is primarily for the training of students for the public works—telegraphs, railways, etc.—of India, and appears to be under the direction of a military officer with no scientific or educational qualifications and a board of visitors. There is a general protest against this action, Lord Kelvin, for example, having written to the *London Times* as follows:

The correspondence which appeared in the *Times* of January 3d regarding Coopers Hill College has caused a painful shock to all who know of the good work which the college has done in giving to India the benefits of well-trained engineers in the service of its Government. No one can read that correspondence, I believe, without being convinced that the seven professors and teachers whose position is threatened are justified in asking for an inquiry.

The proposed action—a sudden and arbitrary dismissal of able and distinguished scientific teachers who have been doing duty for periods of from nine to thirty years in a satisfactory manner—is certainly not to be expected in institutions under the control of the British Government; and I sincerely hope that the Secretary of State for India in Council will see his way to granting the request for an inquiry.

ANOTHER case, in which the appointment of a military officer without scientific attainments as head of a scientific institution has worked unfortunately, is brought to our attention in the case of M. Charles Lagrange, director of the Royal Observatory of Belgium. It appears from the *Independence Belge*, as quoted in *Na-*

ture, that M. Lagrange has resigned his office and has presented to the Belgian Academy of Sciences his two years' arrears of salary, or a capital sum of ten thousand francs, to establish a prize to be awarded, at intervals of four years, for the best contribution to our knowledge of the physics of the globe. In expressing the thanks of the Academy for the gift, General Brialmont described the circumstances which led to M. Lagrange's resignation. It appears that for the past two years the position of director of the Observatory has been a humiliating one, because a young infantry officer, without scientific attainments, has controlled the establishment.

WE are glad to notice that the House of Representatives has, under a suspension of the rules, passed a bill increasing the salary of the Commissioner of Education for Porto Rico from \$3,000 to \$4,000. If, however, our Government is generous in disposing of the money of the Porto Ricans, it should be just in distributing the greater wealth at its disposal, and the eminent Commissioner of Education for the United States should receive as large a salary as the commissioner for Porto Rico.

MR. STARK has introduced into the House of Representatives a resolution of the Legislature of the State of Nebraska, requesting the passage of the bill for the establishment and maintenance of a school of mines in every State where such does not now exist, which has been referred to the Committee on Public Lands.

AT a recent meeting of the New England Anti-vivisection Society, Joseph L. Greene quoted from Senator Gallinger, of New Hampshire, to the effect that the bill against cruelty to animals in the district of Columbia would probably not be taken up at the present session, because of the pressure of business.

THE German budget for 1901 includes 200,000 Marks for the construction of a laboratory for hydraulic experiments at Berlin. The total cost of the laboratory will be about 365,000 Marks. It will be used by the administrations of the Imperial Marine and Inland Waterways and by the students of the technical school. The budget also provides for non-recurring ex-

penditures on science and art over 6,000,000 Marks.

GREAT interest is being taken in the imminent drying up of Great Salt Lake caused by irrigation. We are informed that the plan suggested by Mr. Marcus E. Jones to build a canal from the headwaters of the Snake river, and thus bring water into the Great Basin to replace the waste by evaporation is meeting with general favor. The Utah Legislature is expected to take up the matter at this session. The agricultural sections of Utah are threatened with disaster unless something is done soon.

UNDER the auspices of the International Aeronautical Committee balloon ascents for meteorological purposes were made on January 10th—in so far as the program was carried out—at London, Bath, Paris, Strasburg, Berlin, St. Petersburg and in Virginia.

WE learn from the *Electrical World* that, at a recent meeting of the Frankfort-on-the-Main Association of Electrical Engineers, Herr Wolff, manager of the local branch of the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft, showed a new form of Nernst lamp. The necessary initial heating of this lamp is effected by a spiral of platinum embedded in fireproof composition. By means of a switch concealed within the base of the lamp, this spiral is automatically cut out of circuit after the lamp has been rendered sufficiently conductive by the imparted heat.

#### UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NEWS.

YALE UNIVERSITY has received a bequest of \$50,000 by the will of Albert E. Kent of Chicago, a graduate in 1853. The money is to be used for the enlargement of the Kent Chemical Laboratory which Mr. Kent gave to the University twenty years ago. Yale University has also received during the week, by the death of Benjamin Douglas Silliman, the oldest alumnus of the University, a sum, said to be \$80,000, left by a brother in trust. It is expected that the University will also receive a bequest by the will of Mr. Silliman. Yale University would also receive a trust fund of \$500,000, left by T. B. Winthrop, an alumnus, in case neither of his children should survive.