OBITUARY

RECENT DEATHS

WORCESTER REED WARNER, founder with Mr. Ambrose Swasey, of Warner and Swasey, Cleveland, known among scientific men for their construction of astronomical telescopes, died at Eisenach, Germany, on June 25, in his eighty-fourth year. Mr. and Mrs. Warner sailed on May 8 to spend the summer in Europe.

M. R. OLDFIELD THOMAS, for many years assistant in charge of Mammalia at the British Museum, died on June 16, aged seventy-one years.

HENRI ANDOYER, professor of astronomy at the Sorbonne, Paris, died on June 12, aged sixty-six years.

THE deaths are also announced of Jules Cornet, professor of geology in the University of Ghent, and of Aldo Perroncito, professor of general pathology in the University of Pavia.

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE CENTENARY OF JAMES SMITHSON

THE Smithsonian Institution commemorated on June 27 the one hundredth anniversary of the death of its founder, James Smithson, and prepared the following statement:

Smithson was an Englishman. He never set foot in this country. Yet he left his impress for good upon this nation and through it upon the world as no other citizen and resident of another country has ever done. For what Smithson bequeathed to the keeping of the United States was not merely a sum of money nor an institution. It was an idea; an idea fifty to a hundred years ahead of the times in which he secured it to America, but now the very root-idea of modern achievement. It was the idea of scientific research, of the importance of knowing. "No ignorance is probably without loss to man, no error without evil," wrote James Smithson, and he grubstaked this belief with his fortune. The Smithsonian Institution and all that it has meant to America and the world are the results.

We moderns are much closer to James Smithson than were his contemporaries and the honor that he lacked in his lifetime we can and should give him. The known details of his life are few and rather tragic. The natural son of Hugh Smithson, who later became the Duke of Northumberland, and of Elizabeth Keate Macie, who herself was descended from King Henry VII, he seems to have felt bitterly all his life the bar sinister on his name. He studied at Pembroke College, Oxford, and is reputed to have been the best chemist and mineralogist of his year. Certainly his devotion to science expressed itself at an early age, for at the age of twenty-two, the year after his M.A. from Oxford, he had already achieved enough to win him election to the Royal Society.

Smithson missed being a great scientist as a research worker, but he was a thorough and an indefatigable one. He made many chemical analyses of minerals, wrote several hundred papers, and did much field work in geology and mineralogy. His name lives in the mineral Smithsonite, the carbonate of zinc. But two qualities did render him a great man in science—one was the clarity of his thought and the other his tolerant vision. Nothing was too small nor too great for his consideration. With equal zeal he discussed the origin of the earth and improved oil lamps. Most important of all, he saw clearly and far ahead. He knew how much was to be done and saw the manner in which it would have to be done.

James Smithson never married; in his last years his health failed, and it must have been in the midst of unhappiness and with a sense of frustration that, away from his native land in Genoa, Italy, on June 27, 1829, he died. However, it is perhaps not too much to say that had he been the greatest scientist of his age he could not have served the world better than he did in leaving his fortune of roughly $540,000 "to the United States of America to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

In the hands of Joseph Henry, first secretary of the Smithsonian and the foremost American man of science of his day, Smithson's bequest became the inspiration of American science and even to a measurable extent of world science. It proclaimed actively the ideal of research, it provided funds at a time when there were no funds, it trained men, it seized fleeting opportunities, it gave direction to the most powerful single material force in modern life. Smithson's words and ideal have served as an inspiration to other men and institutions. "For the increase and diffusion of knowledge" has become the common expression of purpose for research establishments. The good that James Smithson did lives after him with a fruitfulness beyond measure.

RESEARCH IN COAL MINING AND METALLURGY AT THE CARNEGIE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A PROGRAM of eight research studies in coal mining and metallurgy will be carried on during the year 1929–30, under the joint auspices of the United States Bureau of Mines, the Carnegie Institute of Technology and Mining and Metallurgical Advisory Boards composed of mining and metallurgical engineers and executives. Eight college graduates have been ap-