



Vignettes: Postal Services

1928: Dr. Mansfield Robinson, a London lawyer, believes that he has been in communication with Mars, and at his request wireless messages will be sent out from Rugby on an 18,500-metre wave-length on Wednesday morning in an effort to get official proof that "contact" has been established. "The Post Office has agreed to accept the message for Mars, not as a scientific experiment for which it is responsible but as a commercial proposition," an official explained. "Obviously we do not guarantee delivery. . . . We shall send the message in the same way that we send to ships in all parts of the world every day—and the charge will be the usual 1s. 6d. a word, which is admittedly a low cost for such a long distance! But it will cost no more to transmit than an ordinary message. At Dr. Robinson's request a watch will be kept for half an hour at St. Albans wireless station on a wave-length of 30,000 metres, and for this service of listening for a reply a special charge will be made."

1941: The first batch of photo-letters under the newly instituted airgraph service from the Middle East arrived in London yesterday morning. The mail contained 50,000 microfilm letters which had been flown from the Middle East. They weighed only 13lb., whereas 50,000 ordinary letters would have weighed nearly three-quarters of a ton.

As soon as they were received the films were sent to the Kodak works, where the staff began to enlarge the letters from the size of a man's finger-nail to 4in. by 5in. As fast as this was done the enlargements were rushed back to the post office to be placed in special envelopes, sorted, and sent to all parts of the country for delivery.

The airgraph service was begun last month, and the first batch of letters has taken about a fortnight to arrive. It is hoped that this time will be shortened as the scheme develops.

—*The Times of London*, as quoted in *Front Page Physics: A Century of Physics in the News* (A. J. Meadows and M. M. Hancock-Beaulieu, Eds.; Institute of Physics Publishing)

reflexive relationship between science and empire." There is no doubt that he has brilliantly succeeded. At times, however, the distinction between the exotic and the colonial is somewhat blurred in the analysis. There is no doubt that the colonial involvement of the society deepened toward the end of the century as the French empire expanded. From 1900 till 1921, the Lamarckian zoologist Edmond Perrier, who was also the director of the natural history museum, presided over the society and re-emphasized its colonial mission. It was under his leadership that the society developed a "conservation ethos global in scale" and played a key role in the establishment, in Algeria, of the first French national parks.

During the 19th century, however, the activities of the society and its Jardin were hardly restricted to colonial purpose. The society also organized dog and cat shows, promoted the consumption of horsemeat, and featured exhibits presenting the faunal resources not only of the French colonies but also of other non-European countries.

The "ethnographic exhibitions" begun in 1877 included, for instance, Argentinian gauchos and Lapps; moreover, the llama, yak, and ostrich, which were the primary target organisms for the acclimatization experiments, were not indigenous to areas then colonized by France. Indeed, Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire makes no mention whatsoever of colonial purposes in the two editions of his treatise on acclimatization and domestication of animals, and as far as I know the obituaries following his death in 1861 are equally silent in that regard. Though the colonial involvement of the society that Osborne has for the first time documented certainly entailed sustained efforts even during the first decades of its existence, in the mind of most contemporaries it may not have been so prominent as it has become in the research program of historians of science.

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Books Received

Application of Botany in Horticulture. André Génin. 4th ed. Science Publishers, Lebanon, NH, 1994. xiv, 208 pp., illus. \$39.50. Translated from the French edition (1990).

Applications of Percolation Theory. Muhammad Sahimi. Taylor and Francis, Philadelphia, 1994. xiv, 258 pp., illus. Paper, \$39.50.

Arms and the Physicist. Herbert F. York. AIP Press, Woodbury, NY, 1995. xiv, 295 pp., illus. \$29.95. Masters of Modern Physics, vol. 12.

Astronomy. From the Earth to the Universe. 4th ed. Jay M. Pasachoff. Saunders (Harcourt Brace), Fort Worth, TX, 1995. xxii, 635 pp., illus., + appendix + index. Paper, \$46.75.

Atmosphere, Climate, and Change. Thomas E. Graedel and Paul J. Crutzen. Scientific American Library (HPHLP), New York, 1995 (distributor, Freeman, New York). x, 196 pp., illus. \$32.95.

Contemporary Health Physics. Problems and Solutions. Joseph John Bevelacqua. Wiley, New York, 1995. xiv, 436 pp., illus. \$64.95.

Contributions to High-Temperature Plasma Physics. Karl H. Spatschek and Jürgen Uhlenbusch, Eds. Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1994 (U.S. distributor, VCH, New York). xii, 487 pp., illus. \$90.

Copepoda, Calanoida, Diaptomidae. Key to the genera *Heliodiaptomus*, *Allodiaptomus*, *Neodiaptomus*, *Phylodiaptomus*, *Eodiaptomus*, *Arctodiaptomus* and *Sinodiaptomus*. Y. Ranga Reddy. SPB Academic, Amsterdam, 1994. viii, 221 pp., illus. Paper, \$63 or Dfl. 110. Guides to the Identification of the Microinvertebrates of the Continental Waters of the World, 5.

Evolutionary Archaeology. Methodological Issues. Patrice A. Teltser, Ed. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1995. viii, 206 pp., illus. \$45; paper, \$21.95.

Molecular Botany. Signals and the Environment. D. J. Bowles et al., Eds. Portland, Chapel Hill, NC, 1994. xii, 288 pp., illus. \$96 or £60. Biochemical Society Symposium no. 60. From a symposium, Leeds, UK, spring 1993.

Monoclonal Antibodies. The Second Generation. Heddy Zola. Bios Scientific, Oxford, UK, 1994 (U.S. distributor, Books International, Herndon, VA). xiv, 205 pp., illus. \$99 or £49.

Pangea. Paleoclimate, Tectonics, and Sedimentation During Accretion, Zenith, and Breakup of a Supercontinent. George D. Klein, Ed. Geological Society of America, Boulder, CO, 1994. vi, 295 pp., illus. Paper, \$72.50. GSA Special Paper 288. Based on a workshop, Lawrence, KS, May 1992.

The Particle Garden. Our Universe as Understood by Particle Physicists. Gordon Kane. Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA, 1995. xvi, 224 pp., illus. \$22.

Permian-Triassic Pangean Basins and Foldbelts Along the Panthalassan Margin of Gondwanaland. J. J. Veevers and C. McA. Powell, Eds. Geological Society of America, Boulder, CO, 1994. iv, 368 pp., illus. \$100. GSA Memoir 184.

Phanerozoic Evolution of North American Continent-Ocean Transitions. Robert C. Speed, Ed. Geological Society of America, Boulder, CO, 1994. x, 504 pp., illus. \$75. Decade of North American Geology, Summary Volume to Accompany the DNAG Continent-Ocean Transect Series.

Sucralfate. From Basic Science to the Bedside. Daniel Hollander and G. N. J. Tytgat, Eds. Plenum, New York, 1995. xxvi, 366 pp., illus. \$69.50.

Women Resisting AIDS. Feminist Strategies of Empowerment. Beth E. Schneider and Nancy E. Stoller, Eds. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1995. xii, 339 pp., illus. \$54.95; paper, \$22.95. Health, Society, and Policy Series.

