

Anniversaries of Science

February 16, 1923.—Sealed chamber of Tutankhamen's tomb at Luxor was opened.

Both from Mesopotamia and Egypt we now have abundant public records, business accounts, stories, poetry and private correspondence. We know that life, for prosperous and influential people in such cities as Babylon and the Egyptian Thebes, was already almost as refined and as luxurious as that of comfortable and prosperous people today. Such people lived an orderly and ceremonious life in beautiful and beautifully furnished and decorated houses, wore richly decorated clothing and lovely jewels; they had feasts and festivals, entertained one another with music and dancing, were waited upon by highly trained servants, were cared for by doctors and dentists. They did not travel very much or very far, but boating excursions were a common summer pleasure both on the Nile and on the Euphrates. The beast of burden was the ass; the horse was still used only in chariots for war and upon occasions of state. The mule was still novel and the camel, though it was known in Mesopotamia, had not been brought into Egypt. And there were few utensils of iron; copper and bronze remained the prevailing metals. Fine linen and cotton fabrics were known as well as wool. But there was no silk yet. Glass was known and beautifully coloured, but glass things were usually small. There was no clear glass and no optical use of glass. People had gold stoppings in their teeth but no spectacles on their noses.

—H. G. Wells: *A Short History of the World*.

February 18, 1564.—Galileo Galilei the great Italian physicist and astronomer, was born.

I esteem myself fortunate to have found so great an ally in the search for truth. It is truly lamentable, that there are so few who strive for the true and are ready to turn away from wrong ways of philosophizing. But here is no place for bewailing the pitifulness of our times, instead of wishing you success in your splendid investigations. I do this the more gladly, since I have been for many years an adherent of the Copernican theory. It explains to me the cause of many phenomena which under the generally accepted theory are quite unintelligible. I have collected many arguments for refuting the latter, but I do not venture to bring them to publication.

—Galileo: *Letter to Kepler*, 1597.

February 21, 1888.—George Henry Corliss died. He invented the Corliss engine, one of the outstanding steps in the development of the modern steam engine.

Corliss invented a valve that worked like a revolving door; a rotary valve. He used these revolving-door valves at each end of the cylinder, one to admit the steam, and one to control the exhaust. A slight motion of one of these valves was sufficient to open or close the steam port or doorway almost without friction. To open and close his rotary valve, or revolving steam-door, automatically, Corliss

invented a governor which was apparently composed of "endless jimcracks all precarious." By a system of parts, certainly more complicated than the simple ball-governor and sleeve of Watt, a weight was made to drop and suddenly cut off the steam as it entered the cylinder and not, as in the Watt engine, some moments later Finding it difficult to convince business men that his engine was any better than Watt's Corliss had to take risks in selling it. He knew his engine, would save coal, and therefore he adopted the plan of installing an engine free of charge and of receiving in payment part of the money saved in coal. He sold one of his first engines with the understanding that he was to be paid all the money it saved in five years. At the end of five years he had pocketed \$19,734.22—several times what the engine was really worth.

—Decker and Kaempffert: *A Popular History of American Invention*.

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HYGIENE

Flu Epidemic Waning?

That the wave of influenza that has been sweeping over Europe is settling down before it touches our shores is the conclusion reached by officials of the U. S. Public Health Service based upon failure to receive further information on the progress of the epidemic. Both the Epidemiological Intelligence Department of the League of Nations and the Health Organization in England announced their intention ten days ago of broadcasting radio reports on the character and progress of the disease. Up to date, however, no reports have been picked up, says Surgeon General Hugh S. Cumming.

The fact that the Arlington Naval Wireless Station has been unable to pick up any of the signals for the Public Health Service is interpreted as meaning that the epidemic is subsiding and that no bulletins have been sent out from the European stations.

The decision of the health section of the League of Nations to make available by broadcasting the information received by extensive epidemiological intelligence section it has been building up, was determined, it is said, by the numerous inquiries received from all over Europe as well as Australia and the United States.

Science News-Letter, February 12, 1927

Mars has two moons, one of which rises in the east and the other in the west.

Bridges to enable pedestrians to cross busy streets have been proposed for Paris.

Houses as tall as five stories have been unearthed at Ostia, the harbor town of ancient Rome.

New Stone Age Venus

First details have been announced regarding a little statuette of a woman carved by some prehistoric artist of the Old Stone Age, which was found near Vienna last September. The headless little stone figure is pronounced a relic of the Aurignacian period of the Old Stone Age, which would make it 25,000 years old, or possibly older.

The statuette was found at Willendorf, near the left bank of the Danube River, and is the second such carving to be found in that region.

Cave man artists of Europe apparently liked to carve these small female figures, which today are called Stone Age Venuses. It is supposed that the figures were used in magic rites or in some religious cult of the time. They are today regarded as objects of great rarity, though a number of them have been found in different countries of Europe.

The first Venus discovered at Willendorf was four inches high, round and very fat, especially at breast and hips. The new find is about ten inches tall, and much more slender. A complete description of the new Venus has not yet been reported.

Science News-Letter, February 12, 1927

EXPLORATION

Explorer Enters China

Ignoring the fighting spirit of the Chinese crowds and their antagonism towards foreigners, Dr. Sven Hedin, famous Swedish explorer, is calmly preparing to set out from Peking on a long expedition to the interior deserts of China. Reports received in this country state that by the end of April, Dr. Hedin's caravan of camels will plunge into the desert from Paoto, the terminal of the Western Chinese Railway.

In the first year of the expedition, the party will study chiefly the climate and geographical features of Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan and the province of Kansu in northwestern China. Weather records will be made from five stations during at least a year and a half, in order to analyze climatic conditions in the large desert belt of Central Asia.

This is Dr. Hedin's third venture into the interior of Central Asia. His first expedition, thirty years ago, was daring pioneer adventuring into a country wrapped in mystery and danger. His second expedition, in 1906, led him to the source of the Brahmaputra River among mountains far in Tibet. Dr. Hedin is now sixty-one years old.

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