

Anniversaries of Science

March 23, 1925—Governor of Tennessee signed act forbidding the teaching of evolution in state supported schools of Tennessee.

Be it Enacted, by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, that it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normals, and all other public schools in the State, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, to teach the theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

March 24, 1849—Johann Wolfgang Döbereiner died. He was the inventor of the Döbereiner lamp.

In 1823 a decided impetus was given to the artificial production of fire by the introduction of the Döbereiner lamp, so called after its inventor, J. W. Döbereiner of Jena. . . . He noticed that a spongy platinum in presence of oxygen can bring about the ignition of hydrogen, and utilized this fact to construct his "hydrogen lamp," the prototype of numerous devices for the self-ignition of coal-gas burners.

—*The Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

March 27, 1899—Wireless messages first passed between England and France.

Throughout the period of my visit, messages, signals, congratulations and jokes were freely exchanged between the operators sitting on either side of the channel. . . . No familiarity with the subject removes the feeling of vague wonder with which one sees a telegraphic instrument merely connected with a length of 150 feet of copper wire run up the side of a flagstaff begin to draw its message out of space and print down in dot and dash on the paper tape the intelligence ferried across thirty miles of water by the mysterious ether.

—Prof. Fleming of the University College in the *London Times*.

March 28, 1874—Peter Andreas Hansen died. He compiled "Tables of the Moon."

It is our moon's motion which has given most trouble to the mathematical astronomers. Merely to print the algebraic terms representing the moon's motion requires a small quarto volume, and to compute tables from them so as to give accurately the moon's position over a long term of years is the work almost of a lifetime. This task of investigating the motion of the moon was undertaken by Peter Andreas Hansen, Director of the Ducal Observatory of Schleswig-Holstein. His daughter, Mrs. Bayard Taylor, tells in her delightful book how, early in their married life, Hansen attended his sixteen-year-old bride to a ball. She was dancing in her wedding gown of white satin, with a wreath of forget-me-nots in her hair, when suddenly she missed her husband. No one could tell her what had become of him. In her fear for him, she ran alone in her white satin slippers all the way from town up the steep height of the seeberg, and found her bridegroom at his

desk, deep in a problem. The idea had struck him in the midst of the dance, and oblivious of everything, he had rushed home to put it on paper.

—Abbot: *The Earth and the Stars*.

Science News-Letter, March 19, 1927

MEDICINE

Skin Test For T. B.

A skin test for tuberculosis that will detect the presence of the white plague in a patient in the early and curable stages is the object of Dr. Frederick Ebersson of the University of California Medical School. Dr. Ebersson has been conducting a series of experiments with serum from the blood of tuberculosis patients that indicate that the body creates a substance, as the disease becomes more acute, that will act as a specific test for the disease in other people.

When extracts or serums of this substance, which as yet has not been named, are injected into the blood of a T. B. suspect the appearance of red spots on the skin, according to Dr. Ebersson, shows the presence of the disease. He also believes that the virulence of the infection can be determined by the type of the patient's reaction. Laboratory tests indicate that this substance is different from tuberculin, which has been used in a similar way but not with great success.

More accurate and earlier diagnosis of tuberculosis with consequent prompt curative treatment, it is hoped, will be the result of these studies now in progress in the California laboratories.

Science News-Letter, March 19, 1927

Prehistoric forests were often set afire by lightning, but the flames rarely spread widely because the woods were thick, dark, damp, and cool.

Scientific Poetry Prizes

The third weekly scientific poetry prize goes to Prof. W. L. Porter, of Davidson College, North Carolina, for his poem "To A Horse Shoe Crab," given in the next column.

Conditions: Poems, verses, rimes, jingles or what-have-you must be original and unpublished. They must express accurately some scientific fact or situation. Address: Poetry Editor, Science Service, 21st and B Sts., Washington, D. C. Keep a copy, as unavailable contributions can not be returned.

Prizes: One poem will be published each week. A prize of \$5.00 will be paid for each poem published.

To A Horse Shoe Crab

This week's prize winning poem in the Science Service scientific poetry contest.

Oh spiny dweller of the deep
Thou canst not run nor fly nor leap,
Nor even swim, but only creep
Along the pebbly shore.

Thou art not beautiful to see,
Thou hast no known utility,
And yet thou seemest here to be
A fixture evermore.

Too slow thou art to make great speed,
Too shelly quite to make good feed,
A theme thou art quite fine indeed
For philosophic thought.

Archaic remnants of the hosts
That dwelt on long departed coasts,
Thou savorest of dreams or ghosts
Of what has long since been.

Why dost thou linger when thy mates
Have cast their reckoning with the fates
And now repose within the gates
Of geologic time?

We boast of our ancestral tree,
It spans a century or three,
Compared with thine it proves to be
A thing of yesterday.

Could we but pierce that crust of thine,
The mysteries that its walls confine,
Of wars with beasts and seas condign,
The pleasure would be ours.

What combats fierce evolved thy mail?
How grew thee such a spindly tail?
Answer but these and we'll not fail
To write a monograph.

But thou art cold and tight and hard,
Thy thoughts and secrets well dost guard,
Thou softenest only to discard
Thy shell when it's too tight.

We leave thee to the struggling swarms
Of animals and winter storms.
Crepidulas and hydroid forms
Are all we ask of thee.
—W. L. Porter.

Science News-Letter, March 19, 1927

An attempt is being made to extract the oil from tar sands in Canada.

In a recent experiment, rats were found to be much more active for 20 to 45 minutes after breathing air containing tobacco smoke.

A new motion picture camera for under sea photography is so simply constructed that it can be operated by any motion picture photographer.