

## Science Notes.

## THE MIGRATIONS OF THE LEMMING.

It has long been known that the lemming, a small rat-like animal of Norway, is subject to periodic wanderings, in the course of which vast numbers leave the mountains, descend towards the sea and swim until they perish. This suicidal tendency has for hundreds of years exercised the minds of naturalists. It has even been brought forward as strong evidence in favour of the former existence of land to the north-west of Spain, which has since been submerged. It is the teaching of evolutionists, that the instincts of animals as a race must either be of value in their preservation at the present time, or, at any rate, must have been so in the past. For this reason, some persons believe that the tendency to make for the sea is inherited by the lemming from ancestors who thus reached a new land.

Professor Collett, of Christiania, has recently published an account of his researches into the literature of the lemming, and also of his personal observations of his habits. He finds the earliest notice of the lemming in an old Norse manuscript, dating from the latter end of the thirteenth century, and reproduces a woodcut (published 1555) representing the descent of lemmings from the clouds.

Prof. Collett finds that the migrations of the lemming appear to be directly due to over-population. Some years are characterised by an enormous and exceptional rate of increase, a phenomenon not confined to the lemming, but noticed with other groups of mammals, as well as various birds and insects. The vast increase of the animals obliges them to wander in various directions and some reach the valleys. They thus find themselves in localities unfamiliar and unsuited to them and are probably still continuing their search for a home corresponding to the one they have left when they meet their death. Thousands are drowned in the rivers and fords, thousands are attacked by beasts and birds of prey, and thousands perish from the effects of cold and damp; but the greater number succumb to a peculiar epidemic which attacks them in the lowlands.

Prof. Collett considers that the migratory instinct is of service to the race because it reduces the surplus population. The object of the wanderings appears to be to find a suitable home when the birth-place of the wanderers has become over-crowded. The more extended journeys, however, are completely wanting in success, for the lemming has not succeeded in establishing itself anywhere except in the uplands of Scandinavia.

CONTRASTED with the delightful meeting of the British Association at Oxford last year—a meeting which was unanimously agreed to have been the “best on record”—it will seem a little tame to meet this year at Ipswich, which is not particularly historic or interesting. The first General Meeting will be held at Ipswich on September 11th, when the Marquis of Salisbury, who gave so memorable a presidential address last year, will resign the chair, and Sir Douglas Galton, the president-elect, will deliver an address. Professor Thompson will lecture on the “Work of Pasteur and its various Developments,” while Professor Frankland will discourse on “Magnetism in Rotation.” Some interesting excursions are being arranged, and the hospitable resources of Ipswich are to be generously used for the pleasure and entertainment of the visitors.

## Reflections

## FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



H.R.H. Princess Christian, accompanied by Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, attended at the Albert Institute, Windsor, on the evening of May 18th and presented certificates and medals to members of the St. John's Ambulance Classes of Windsor and Eton. The students were largely composed of Great Western Railway employes. On the Great Western system 2,255 men have now obtained certificates, and have rendered First Aid to the wounded in 1,127 accidents. Dr. Fairbank, surgeon to Princess Christian, was presented by Her Royal Highness with an illuminated address in acknowledgment of his gratuitous teaching.

The meeting announced for May 21st at the Royal Institution on behalf of Invalid and Training Homes is postponed owing to several officers who had intended to take part in it being detained on active duty.

The Annual Festival Dinner of the Gt. Ormond Street Hospital for Children was, as is usual, a great success. The Duke of Cambridge, who presided, said that as the result of a recent visit he could report that he had never seen a better organised institution than this Hospital for Children. The Duke of Fife reminded those present that at the time of the foundation of the Hospital very little had been done for children and their diseases and this was the first Hospital in Great Britain to supply them with all the resources of science and the benefits of good nursing; £2,131 17s. was subscribed in the course of the evening.

The Annual Floral Fête and Crowning of the May Queen took place on May 18th at the Homes for Little Boys, Farningham, Kent. The boys were seen at work, printing, shoemaking, baking, carpentering and gardening. The Homes accommodate 500 boys who are either homeless or orphans. In spite of the cold weather the function was well attended and the ceremony of crowning the May Queen, who was accompanied by four maids of honour and two pages, took place in the large drill hall. The Mayor and Mayoress of Gravesend took part in the proceedings.

The Aberdeen Hospital for Sick Children, in presenting its Eighteenth Annual Report announces that by command of the Queen the word “Royal” is to be prefixed. This is a charming little Hospital and admirably managed. It has established the three years' training. There are two convalescent cottages in connection—the Eidda Home at Culter, which accommodated forty children and three nurses for periods ranging from three to twenty weeks, during 1894—this Home is almost entirely maintained by Miss Lumsden, of Camphill. The Auchlumes Cottage belongs to and is supported by Miss Duguid. The generosity of these two ladies is thoroughly appreciated by the Directors. The average daily expenditure per patient is 2s. 3d. One cot is maintained by the contributions received from week-day and Sunday schools, while the Aberdeen Football Association maintains another cot which is named after the Club.

The Duke and Duchess of Westminster were present at the Annual Meeting of the Hospital for Women in Soho Square, on May 17th. Special appeals were made for subscriptions to meet the additional expenses incurred by recent improvements—such as the new out-patient hall and the increased nurses' accommodation.

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