
CENTENARIES

Webster, Noah (1758-1843)

NOAH WEBSTER, the American lexicographer, was born at West Hartford, 16th October 1758. Having taken his degree at Yale in 1778 and after spending about fifteen years in the legal profession, he found his vocation in the publication of the *American spelling book* of which more than 15,000,000 copies were sold in his life-time. He collaborated with Benjamin Franklin in spelling reform. After trying journalism for about a decade, he found a substantial income by publishing the well-known series of books *Elements of useful knowledge*.

Webster was versatile and covered a vast field of knowledge. His *Brief history of epidemic and pestilential diseases* (2 vols.) (1799) and his *Experiments respecting dew* (1809) were pioneer books in science in America. It is also claimed that Webster's work as statistician and climatologist foreshadowed the census and weather bureaus of later times.

Webster's many-sided publishing activity proved an admirable preparation for lexicography. He worked at his famous dictionary for twenty-five years and brought out the first edition in 2 vols. in 1828 under the title *An American dictionary of the English language*.

Webster died at Amherst, 28th May 1843.

Tweddell, Ralph Hart (1843-1895)

RALPH HART TWEDDELL, a British engineer, was born at South Shields, 25th May 1843. Even during his apprenticeship he took out a patent for a portable hydraulic apparatus to fix the ends of boiler tubes. The success of this led him to employ hydraulic power in boiler construction. In 1865, he invented a hydraulic riveting machine, which reduced the cost to one-seventh of hand-work. In 1871, he invented the portable riveter. This process came to be used all the world over for riveting bridges and ships.

In 1874, Tweddell's system was adopted in French shipbuilding yards. He contributed several papers on the use of hydraulic pressure and earned a gold medal from the Society of Arts. In 1890 he was awarded a Bessemer premium for the paper *Application of water pressure to machine tools and appliances*.

Tweddell died at Meopham Court, 3rd September 1895.

University Library,
Madras,
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S. R. RANGANATHAN

SCIENCE NOTES AND NEWS

Animal Husbandry Wing Meeting.—The fifth Animal Husbandry Wing Meeting of the Board of Agriculture was held in the last week of November in New Delhi. The main subject discussed was measures to be taken to secure betterment of the large cattle population with a view to increase their produce required for human nutrition. The Conference took the view that by offering the producers increased price and an assured market, it will be possible to secure increased output of milk and ghee. An increase in price can to a certain extent satisfy the demand by drawing upon distant rural areas but considering the fact that a shortage of foodstuffs for cattle exists, possibilities in this direction will be rather limited. The fact that "India suffers from an excess of the animal population" was realised at the meeting and also that elimination of these animals "would confer a real benefit". However in view of the present public sentiments no effective remedy could be found for this major problem.

At the various sub-committees valuable practical suggestions regarding the control of

cattle diseases, etc., in India were made. These measures when taken in conjunction with better feeding and breeding programmes, should prove very useful. With a view to make the veterinary education more uniform throughout the country and useful to the cattle industry of the country, a comprehensive curriculum was suggested.

In his opening remarks, the Hon'ble Member for Education, Health and Lands, suggested that the Conference should draw out an objective practical programme of work which may be taken up by the country during the next five years. This appeal has met with the response it deserved. A sixty-point programme has been drawn up and if a concentrated effort is made to put it in practice much good ought to result. One can only wish that this had come five years earlier. It will be too much to hope that this stupendous work can be seriously taken up by the State during the present emergency. It may, however, be considered a charter for post-war reconstruction.

This meeting of animal husbandry workers has given to the country a large amount of data