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Ourselves.

WITH this issue, *Current Science* enters on its third year, so the present is regarded as a suitable occasion to review the progress of the past two years.

It has been generally admitted by scientific workers, both in India and abroad, that the Journal fulfils a long-felt want; that it represents the progress, at any rate, of a large section of Indian science; and that it provides a useful medium for active scientific contact between India and the rest of the world. The popularity of the Journal is evidenced by the large number of contributors and wide circle of readers both in India and elsewhere. Its publications are abstracted and reviewed by various technical Journals in different parts of the world. The original contributions, as also many of the Special Articles, are cited in literature and extracts liberally quoted. It is indeed flattering to note that some of the articles appearing in *Current Science* have been reproduced as such in a number of technical Journals.

From the scientific point of view, the most important section of the Journal is that which relates to Letters to Editor. The value of a science news Journal depends largely on prompt publication of new findings and this fact is recognised by the Editors who are endeavouring to provide all possible facilities in this direction. Letters which are received up to the 9th or 10th of each month are generally included in the issue appearing in about a fortnight from that date. Except in some occasional cases where the referee resides at some considerable distance, or is otherwise unable to deal quickly with the matter, every note is promptly scrutinised and the authors informed of the decisions of the Board as early as possible.

The technical status of a Journal is largely determined by the quality of its matter and this applies more than anything else to the nature of the announcement which figure in correspondence columns. Great care is being exercised therefore in the scrutiny of papers received for publication in this section. In this connection it may be mentioned that acting on the recommendations of their specialist referees, the Editors have on several occasions been obliged either to refuse publications or to return papers to authors for the necessary alterations.

This was always done in good faith and with proper courtesy and it is pleasing to record that most authors accepted the decisions in the right spirit.

It is largely as the result of the above that the Letters columns of *Current Science* have found favour with many of the contributors from both within India and abroad. The columns have provided space not only for announcements of new findings but also for discussion of themes of controversial character. The latter have elicited many points of much scientific interest and except in a few stray cases, have generally been marked by moderate tone and liberal outlook.

The Special Articles have always formed an important feature of the Journal. They are mostly contributions from experts in the respective lines and generally written in a style and manner calculated to interest not only other specialists in the line but also those pursuing other branches of science. The articles have generally been of the nature of reviews covering a vast field and often including a useful part of the author's own contributions to the subject. Some have also been themes with constructive suggestions relating to certain scientific departments of the Government. There have also been some others dealing with subjects of topical interest such as the Cyclone on the East coast, and the Earthquake in Bihar.

The leading articles have generally dealt with subjects of popular as well as specialised technical interest. They have covered a wide range of themes from molasses to birth-control and from the several letters we have received it has to be inferred that they are being read with considerable interest by a large section of readers. The articles have not been mere scientific discussions: in many cases, they have also included constructive suggestions some of which have already been adopted while others are being seriously considered by the Governments or organisations concerned. Particular mention may be made of the articles relating to Marine Fisheries, Protection of Game and an Academy of Sciences for India—all of which have excited considerable interest both in India and abroad.

In January of every year the Journal issues a special Supplement relating to the meeting of the Indian Science Congress held during that month. The Supplement

includes a leading article, the Presidential Address *in extenso* and abstracts of the different Sectional Addresses. Some space is also devoted to summaries of public lectures and technical symposia held under the auspices of the Congress. Proceedings of annual meetings of different learned Societies which take place during the Congress Week are also briefly narrated. In addition to the above, the second volume of the Journal also includes a special Review Supplement relating to a wide range of publications issued during that year. It is hoped that with more encouragement and better co-operation, it will be possible during succeeding years to issue more supplements, dealing with a wide range of subjects.

The Research Notes include abstracts of a number of outstanding contributions in different branches of science. In addition to noticing subjects of purely scientific interest, special effort is also made to include findings of practical importance. The available space being rather restricted, it is not possible to include notes relating to all branches of science in any single issue of the Journal, but the matter is being so distributed that most of the subjects are covered in the course of a few months.

The section of Science News is devoted to a variety of subjects such as certain types of technical matter which for certain reasons cannot be included under other heads, scientific items of general interest, university and educational intelligence, appointments, scholarships for higher studies and such like. This section has been popular with a large section of readers and it is hoped that it will be possible to make it still more interesting and useful in the later issues.

Some space is allotted to subjects of industrial interest but it has not so far been possible to find themes of such general interest as would appeal to most of our readers. It is hoped, however, with increasing interest in the industrial development of the country it would be possible to allot more space to this section.

The advertisements relating to scientific equipment or technical literature are quite select in their character. They are sponsored by firms of very high standing and we are proud to include them among our clients. Owing to the fairly long interval that lapses between the issues of the Journal, we have so far been able to attract only

a few advertisements relating to higher appointments in science, but it is hoped that it will be possible to include more in the present and the later volumes. In addition to this it is also proposed to provide some additional space under the section of Science News or elsewhere for brief notes relating to some of the higher appointments for which applications are invited during the month in which the Journal appears.

Taken on the whole, the past two years have witnessed the consolidation of the position of the Journal both in India and abroad, accompanied by steady improvement in various directions. Any little success that has been achieved is largely due to the active support and co-operation of a number of scientific workers in India and abroad. To them as also to our other friends we are thankful for the good start which the Journal has made and the bright outlook for the future.

Even in days of general affluence, scientific journalism was rarely ever a financial success. It need hardly be wondered therefore that in these days of stringency, *Current Science* can hardly hope to run on the comparatively small income derived from subscriptions alone. Fortunately for the venture, a few Universities and scientific

institutions have generously come to our assistance. Particular mention may be made of the liberal donations from the Universities of Madras, Mysore, Hyderabad and Nagpur, as also the Indian Science Congress. The Council of the Indian Institute of Science have not only given substantial annual grants but have also provided the Journal with room for its office and other facilities. But for these and other friends who have liberally donated in their private capacities, the Journal would not have been the success that it is to-day.

Even at the time of our writing, the financial position of the Journal is not so strong as one would wish it to be. The income is just about sufficient to meet the liabilities, so there is hardly any margin for fresh developments. It is earnestly hoped therefore that more Universities, scientific institutions and private donors would come forward and help the promoters in their venture. *Current Science* is a national institution standing for the progress of science in India and it is the duty of every one interested in the welfare of the country to rally round and render all possible assistance to make the Journal an international success.

The Great Indian Fin Whale (*Balænoptera Indica*) stranded at Bombay.

ON 7th May a large specimen of the Great Indian Fin Whale was washed ashore at the Colaba Reclamation, Bombay. The specimen had evidently been long dead as it was thrown up in a highly decomposed condition. Being an unusual sight and considered a sacred animal, news of the monster spread far and wide. Hundreds of people continued to visit the spot for several days till the carcass was removed. In spite of the condition of the carcass people flocked to collect the oozing blubber and portions of the meat. The condition of the animal was such that it was quite impossible to make detailed notes to amplify the meagre description of Blandford in the *Fauna British India (Mammalia)*, p. 567. This description was based on the mandibular rami, a rib, the right radius and 5 vertebræ preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Nothing is known of the external characters of this whale.

Though the *Times of India* reported this specimen to be 52 ft. in length, the figure is much under-estimated, considering the

actual length of the mandibular rami. Each mandible taped approximately 20 ft. 4 in. over the outer curve and 16 ft. in straight measurement. Working on this data it is estimated that this whale could not have been much under 70 ft. when in the flesh, perhaps even a little longer.

There are several records of the stranding of this species along the west coast of India. A specimen measuring 63 ft. was washed ashore at Bassein, north of Bombay, in 1906.¹ Another, 70 ft. in length, was reported from Viziadrug, near Ratnagiri. In 1912 a specimen 61 ft. was stranded at Ratnagiri. Prater² gave some measurements and a photograph of the small Great Indian Fin Whale 41 ft. in length, which was washed up at Ratnagiri in 1914. There are a few records of the stranding of this species along our coast. In all cases the carcasses were too decomposed to add much to the existing description.

MCCANN.

¹ *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*; 1906, 17, 533.

² *Ibid.*, 1914, 23, 576.