

is less familiar and a paper may suffer harm from unstudied remarks. Indeed, the value of the Quarterly Journal may be lessened by the insertion of such criticisms, which the Editor can hardly in fairness eliminate.

My suggestion is that the publication of the discussions should be limited to the Proceedings. The papers published in the Journal, usually the result of years of work, would not then suffer by juxtaposition with remarks composed at a few minutes' notice, and the Proceedings would have a more lasting value. Personally, I should like to see their interest and value still further increased (and the bulk of the Journal diminished) by the inclusion in the Proceedings of the President's address, the Report of the Council, etc.

CHARLES DAVISON.

16, MANOR ROAD, EDGBASTON, BIRMINGHAM.

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#### THE PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

SIR,—My attention has been called to an error in the printed report of an address I delivered to the Geologists' Association last February on "The Centenary of the Geological Society", which I shall be glad if you will allow me to correct. On p. 369 of the Proceedings of the Geologists' Association, vol. xx, the statement occurs: "Since Forbes's day no President has been elected under 50, with the exception of Dr. Marr, who was 47." This should read as follows: "Since Forbes's day no President has been elected under 40, and during the last twenty years none under 50, with the exception of Dr. Marr, who was 47." The mistake arose through a line being dropped in transcribing my notes, and it escaped attention while passing through the press. As a matter of fact, there were seven Presidents of the Society under 50 between Forbes and Dr. Marr, viz., Hamilton (first term), Sharpe, Ramsay, Smyth, Huxley, the Duke of Argyll, and Professor Judd. While on this subject I may note that the oldest President was Leonard Horner, who when elected for his second term was 75.

Perhaps I may also be allowed to remind your readers that the recent election of Sir Archibald Geikie to the Presidential Chair of the Royal Society adds a third name to those I have mentioned on the above-quoted page of my address (Lord Northampton and Huxley) who have served as Presidents both of the Royal and Geological Societies.

R. S. HERRIES.

5, NEW STREET SQUARE, E.C.

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#### THE BURNING CLIFF NEAR LYME REGIS.

SIR,—Now that the spontaneous combustion at the Lyme Regis end of Black Ven has been mentioned in your pages, I beg to be allowed to point out a possible source of misconception to visitant geologists as to the extent of the burning. But first let me make it clear that my statement is only hearsay, and may be mere gossip; for

being otherwise busied at the time, I was unable to investigate the matter. Its bearing, however, on the magnitude of the effect in this instance of what is an established natural phenomenon is obvious and for that reason considerable.

The cliff took fire early in 1908. Notices, descriptions, and explanations appeared in various papers, local and otherwise, and enterprising shopkeepers in Lyme took photos and exhibited them as picture postcards, which they sold as mementos of 'the volcano'. The advertisement attracted visitors to Lyme, and evidently the burning cliff was a source of profit to the Lyme folk. In Charmouth, during April, 1908, it was common talk that when the 'volcanic' activity appeared to be subsiding, disappointed Lyme people poured paraffin on the cliff and relighted it. It is probable that, saturated with enough paraffin, any clay cliff would burn when lighted, and the effect would be commensurate with the amount of oil used. If paraffin was poured on the burning part of Black Ven, it has made it impossible to judge the extent of the natural combustion and of its effects. Last April a beautiful specimen of burnt red shale was in the Coach and Horses Hotel at Charmouth, but the interest it would naturally have evoked was spoiled by the suspicion that it was the result not of the heated behaviour of Black Ven, but of the commercial ardour of Lyme speculators. It would be interesting if a future Lyme visitor would investigate the report and establish the truth. In August last the Charmouth world said that the Lyme people had over-reached themselves, and had made so much of the 'volcano' that intending visitors stayed away through fear. This sounds so unlikely that one is inclined to doubt the truth of the paraffin statement.

With apologies for much gossip, even though it contains a warning,  
PASSER VENENSIS.

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## OBITUARY.

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### JOSEPH LOMAS, F.G.S.

BORN NOVEMBER 18, 1860.

DIED DECEMBER 17, 1908.

MR. JOSEPH LOMAS, whose sad and premature death we recorded last month, was born at Bugsworth, on the borders of the Derbyshire Peak district, on November 18, 1860. He received his scientific education at the Royal College of Science under Professors Huxley, Judd, and others. In 1885 he was appointed to organize and conduct the teaching of science in the elementary public schools of Liverpool under the School Board, and he was professionally occupied with that work until the end. During his later years he was also a successful "Special Lecturer" in Geology in the University of Liverpool, which still has no professor of this important branch of science.

Though equally well trained as a zoologist and as a geologist, Lomas was inclined chiefly towards researches of a geological nature. His most important early work related to questions of Glacial Geology, which he attempted to solve by visits to Switzerland and the Farøe