

ENCOURAGEMENT OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH :

THE DARWIN PRIZE.

It affords an unalloyed pleasure to have the privilege of submitting to our readers the details of a valuable plan for the encouragement and reward of original research by local Geologists, Naturalists, and Archæologists. The scheme, it will be seen, hangs from one of a suggestion warmly received at the Northampton meeting of the Midland Union by its members, and by them referred to the Committee of Management to consider and if approved to carry out. The "Darwin Prize" will, we feel assured, act as an incentive to much real and useful work, and we trust no year will pass without that desirable reward being cordially won. The following extract from the letter in which Mr. Darwin gave his permission for the prize to be named after him, was in answer to the unanimously expressed desire of the Committee:—

"I request that you will be so good as to inform the members of the Committee that their wish to name the Medal after me is a very great honour, which I gladly accept. It is particularly pleasing to me to have my name associated, in however indirect a manner, with a scheme for advancing Science—the study of which has been my chief source of happiness throughout life."

This plan for encouraging original work affords the utmost liberty, whilst given limits each year, for the contributions to deal with subjects deliberately chosen by the writers. If, as we hope will always be the case, the communications to be rewarded by the Darwin Prize are the result of much careful investigation, the pages of this journal will be enriched by them, and they will add to the stores of scientific knowledge. Thus next year the whole range of Zoology is open to select from, embracing entomology, petrology, and the application of chemistry, the microscope, and the polariscope, to the study of rocks and minerals. The following is the scheme adopted by the Committee:—

THE MIDLAND UNION OF NATURAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES.

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THE DARWIN PRIZE.

The Council, at the last Annual Meeting at Northampton, decided by consultation, with their hearty approval, a proposal made by one of their body, Mr. W. Jerome Harrison, F.R.S., to the effect that an Annual Prize should be provided for the purpose of inspiring and encouraging original research by Members of the Societies in the Union. The proposal was favourably received by the Meeting, and referred to the Committee of Management, who were requested to carry it into effect if they saw fit.

After careful consideration by the Committee, at a Meeting held at Northampton, on Thursday, July 15th, 1880, the President-Elect (Dr. T. Wright, F.R.S.) in the chair, the following scheme was adopted:—

3rd.—That a Prize, to be called, by permission of Mr. Charles Darwin, F.R.S., "The Darwin Prize," of the value of £20, to include a Gold or Bronze "Darwin Medal," at the option of the successful candidate, be given annually for a paper indicating original research upon a subject within the scope of the Sciences in the Union, contributed by a member for publication in the Journal of the Union.

4th.—That the subjects for "The Darwin Prize" for the three years ensuing, be limited as under—

- In 1881 to Geology.
- In 1882 to Botany.
- In 1883 to Zoology.

5th.—That a Committee of five, annually elected for the purpose by the Committee of Management, adjudicate the prize to such paper, of sufficient merit, on the subject of the year, mentioned in a statement to the Journal of the Union, (the "Midland Naturalist,") either actually published, or sent in by publication during the twelve months preceding the 31st of March of that year, and before the adjournment of the Annual Meeting.

6th.—That right be reserved for the adjudicators to withhold the prize, if in their opinion no contribution has been sent in of sufficient merit.

Contributions for "The Darwin Prize" next year must be forwarded to the Editors of the "Midland Naturalist," Midland Counties Herald Office, Birmingham, on or before the 31st March, 1881.

HENRY W. WALKER, President.

T. WEAVER, F.R.S., Chairman of the Committee.

ROBERT W. BROWN. } Sec. Gen.

EDWARD BAKER. }

Birmingham, July 22nd, 1880.

MIDLAND UNION OF NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETIES.

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING AT NORTHAMPTON,
JUNE 17th and 18th, 1880.

THE CONVERSATION.

The Conversation at Northampton was an satisfactory and interesting one there at Birmingham and Leicester at the former meetings of the Union. It was held in the Guildhall, on Thursday evening June 17th. The rules of games was discarded, and the general arrangements carried out by Messrs. R. H. Billing, E. J. Aldwin, R. J. Newman, and W. D. Ford, who are to be congratulated upon the result of their labours, and upon the way in which, by the liberal use of phoradia they made leisure in the various rooms the different exhibits were placed in the somewhat complicated building. Valuable help in the same direction was also given in the excellent catalogue, drawn up by Mr. E. Thompson, F.R.S., in which the each exhibit was, as far as possible, carefully described.