

ORSON DESAIX MUNN.

With the death of Mr. Orson Desaix Munn, there has passed from our midst the last of the two original founders of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN. For an unbroken period of sixty-two years this journal was the object of the earnest zeal and close attention of a life which, before its close, had stretched far beyond the allotted three-score years and ten. His associates recall with mournful interest that Mr. Munn was at his desk as recently as February 15—the day preceding the slight stroke of paralysis which, in spite of a rally which gave hopes of his recovery, resulted in his decease in the evening of February 28, in the eighty-third year of his age. Like his partner, the late Alfred Ely Beach, whose death was recorded in these columns a little over eleven years ago, Mr. Munn gave the whole of his attention to the interests of this journal.

It was fitting that one whose name was to be so intimately associated with the work of fostering and chronicling the scientific and industrial development of his country during the most notable period of its growth, should come of good American stock, whose foundations were laid in the stirring days of the early New England settlers. The first direct ancestor of the deceased who settled in America was Benjamin Munn, who in 1637 removed from Hartford, Conn., to Springfield, Mass., and subsequently was an active participant in the Pequot war, having served under the leadership of Capt. John Mason. From him was descended Reuben Munn, who raised a company and marched to Cambridge at the time of the Lexington alarm call. He served under Gates during the campaign resulting in the surrender of Burgoyne, and finally attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. Rice Munn, who was born in 1776 and died in 1866, was the father of the subject of the present memorial, and is described as exemplifying the sterling qualities of the Puritan stock from which he was descended—upright and honest in his dealings, a true friend, a good father and husband, and a man of more than average ability. He married Lavinia Shaw, and Orson Desaix Munn, the youngest son of that union, was born in Monson, Mass., June 11, 1824.

He was educated at Monson Academy, and after a brief business experience in his native town, young Munn in the year 1846, was induced by his former schoolmate, Alfred Ely Beach, to take a step which determined both his future life residence and his future life work. Young Mr. Beach, who was employed on the staff of the New York Sun, at that time owned by his father, Moses Y. Beach, had learned that a publication known as the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN was for sale, and asked Mr. Munn to join him in the purchase of the property. A partnership was formed, and the firm of Munn & Co. established. An office was taken in the old Sun building at the corner of Fulton and Nassau Streets, and the knowledge and advice secured by such close association with the great daily proved invaluable to the young editors and publishers. The first issue under the new firm appeared on July 23, 1846.

In a period when the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN was the only journal in the United States devoted purely to science and mechanics, it was inevitable that its editors should be brought into touch with the inventors of the day, and one of the most frequent callers was Elias Howe of sewing machine fame. This intercourse naturally led to the establishment of a patent department. The announcement of this policy, coming at a time when the profession of the patent lawyer was practically unknown, met with immediate response, and marked the auspicious beginning of a practice which speedily necessitated the opening of a Washington office, and ultimately grew to be the largest of the kind in existence. The offices of the journal soon became the center for the gathering of the most noted inventors of the day, and here the editors were in constant intercourse with such men as Capt. John Ericsson, Commodore Edwin A. Stevens, Capt. James B. Eads, and Samuel F. B. Morse. Judge Mason, a Commissioner of Patents of those days, on his retirement from the Patent Office, became associated with Munn & Co. in their patent department. He was an

able man, very popular with inventors, who achieved a notable success in fighting to a successful issue the extension of the Morse telegraph patents. Apart from the fact that the department thus inaugurated in the sixty years of its life has been concerned in the securing of over 100,000 patents, it has formed the school in which some of the most noted patent lawyers of the day received their first training.

The next important step in the history of the firm was the publication of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN SUPPLEMENT, whose *raison d'être* was found in the wish to describe and illustrate the mass of interesting exhibits at the Centennial Exposition of 1876. The success of the venture led to the decision to continue the publication as a weekly review of the scientific literature of the day, in which might be included articles too long or strictly technical for the more popular tastes of the readers of the parent paper. This was followed a few years later by the publication of LA AMERICA CIENTIFICA, designed to place the various Spanish-speaking races of South America in touch with the progress of science and the arts in the sister northern republic. In 1885 the firm decided that, in view of the large number of requests for information on the subject of house building and furnishing and

try, he was essentially and by choice kind and gentle—as keen in his sympathy with the unfortunate and suffering as he was strong in his dislike of all the forms and instruments of violence. His works of philanthropy, public and private, have endeared his name to the many who were the objects of his generous and unostentatious benevolence. His chosen means of recreation showed his tastes to be essentially those of a country gentleman. His winters were spent in his town house in East Twenty-second Street, where he had lived continuously for over fifty years; but he always welcomed the coming of spring and the opportunity to return in the early summer to his charming country home, "The Terraces," in Llewellyn Park, Orange, N. J.

The deceased was one of the oldest members of the Union Club and a civil war member of the Union League Club, both of this city. He belonged also to the Merchants' and Essex County Country Clubs, the New England Society, and the Sons of the Revolution.

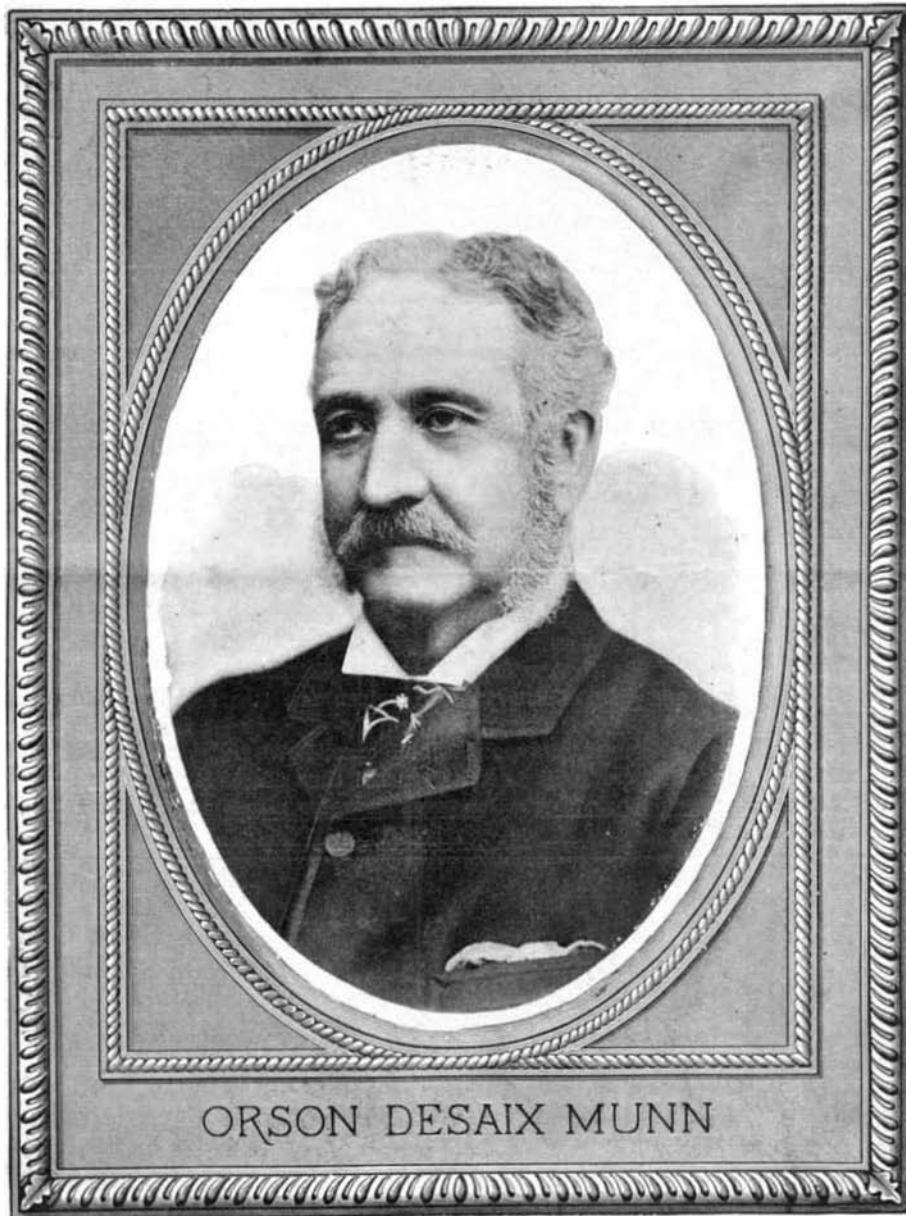
In 1849 Mr. Munn married Julia Augusta Allen. She died on October 26, 1894. The surviving son, Charles Allen Munn, and Frederick Converse Beach, son of the late Alfred Ely Beach, are the leading spirits in the present company. An elder son, Henry Norcross Munn, died a few years ago. His son, who has just begun his career in the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN office, will preserve the name which has been so long associated with this publication, as he bears the name of his grandfather, Orson Desaix Munn.

KITES IN LIFE-SAVING OPERATIONS.

The use of kites in life-saving operations at sea is attracting some attention in France, and a new system consists in the combination of kites and an improved floating device known as "deviator." Such a system has been brought out quite recently by M. Jansen, and a series of trials with the apparatus, which were very successful, was made in the last week of February. The trials took place at Royan, on the coast of France, between the shore and vessels, and they were made in the following way: The steamer "Yvonne," gaging 300 tons, belonging to the Société Centrale de Sauvetage, was employed in the maneuvers, and the object was to carry a tow-line to it from the outer end of the Royan jetty. During the tests the steamer was constantly anchored at about 2,000 feet to the west of the fixed point whence started the "deviators" carrying the tow-line. The wind was very strong and blew from north-northwest to northwest one-fourth west. Owing to these conditions it was quite impossible to make connection from the shore to the boat by the use of a kite alone.

As regards the kite which was let up and was fixed to the float, or deviator, so as to tow it, this is of the Hargrave pattern of the two-cell type. Attached to the deviator, it underwent on the part of the latter a tractive effort such that the ensemble of the system succeeded in deviating from the direction of the wind by angles which varied between 60 and 70 degrees, according to the needs of the maneuver. At the end of the operation the deviator arrived at the point where the vessel was lying, and the line connecting the float to the kite covered the rigging of the ship and was caught in the latter. In the evolutions made by M. Jansen's new deviator, what is to be noticed outside of the surety of direction is the rapidity with which it makes its movement. Thus it required only four minutes, chronometered by the officers delegated by the Life Saving Society, for the deviator to cover the 500 meters separating the jetty from the vessel, given a speed of wind which exceeded 35 meters per second. In the experiments the apparatus was handled by two members of the Société Française de Navigation Aérienne, M. Jansen, the inventor, who looked after the regulation and trajectory of the float, and M. Varilles, who steered the Hargrave kite.

The German exports of iron and steel last year represent a total of 3,666,278 tons, against 3,358,420 in 1905, an increase of 307,854 tons, or 9 per cent. The excess of exports over imports amounted to 2,976,198 tons, against 2,981,425, a decrease of 5,227 tons, or 0.2 per cent.



kindred subjects, the time was ripe for launching a monthly journal, covering this field, and the first issue of the Building Edition of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN made its appearance accordingly. The success of this venture justified the enlargement of the scope of the publication, and in 1905 it was remodeled and published in a new form under its present name of AMERICAN HOMES AND GARDENS.

We have given this somewhat detailed sketch of the growth of the enterprise that was started so modestly some sixty years ago, for the reason that the history of the firm is the history of the business life of the late editor and proprietor. It was during the long and cordial co-operation of the ever-growing staff of employees that the latter learned to look upon Mr. Munn with warm regard and affection; and to this attitude of personal interest, sympathy, and confidence, shown by both members of the firm, is to be attributed the unusually protracted tenure of position by a large portion of the present staff, whose term of service has, in some cases, covered between thirty and forty years.

The keynote to the character of the deceased was his benevolent optimism. Although, when occasion required, he could act with all the stern sense of justice and righteous indignation of his New England ances-