

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JOHANN BAPTIST MESSERSCHMITT.

Johann Baptist Messerschmitt was born December 9, 1861, of well-to-do parents in the Bavarian town of Bamberg. He died April 13, 1912, after a life of unusual activity, in which his devotion to the chosen work, his great executive ability, and valuable scientific publications gave him an honored place in the scientific world.

His early education began at the Latin school in Bamberg, from which he went to the Realgymnasium in Würzburg, and later to the Technical High School in Zürich, and finally to Leipzig. Already enthusiastic in the study of science, and more particularly of astronomy, he accepted a position, without salary, in the Astrophysical Observatory at Potsdam, where he began his scientific labors under the late Prof. H. C. Vogel.

In 1887 he occupied a similar position at the University of Erlangen. In need, however, of a properly paid position, he entered the service of the Swiss Government as engineer of the Swiss Geodetic Commission for International Land Surveys. From 1888 to 1899 he covered a large part of Switzerland with astronomical and geodetic observations and measurements, especially with gravity determinations. During a part of this time he was also privat docent at the University and at the Technical High School of Zürich, besides publishing many scientific works. Desirous, however, of returning to his native land, he accepted in 1899 a position on the scientific staff of the Deutsche Seewarte at Hamburg in spite of the lower salary. His work consisted of magnetic observations and standardization of marine instruments.

It was not until 1903 that he finally was able to devote himself entirely to his chosen field. As observer, and later as director, of the Magnetic Observatory in Munich his scientific and executive abilities had full scope. The Observatory was still in its period of foundation and needed a person of marked organizing power. Within a remarkably short time the task was accomplished of completing the instrumental outfit, of arranging the observational work and of bringing a vast amount of observational material up to date and of publishing the results. He continued up to the time of his death in charge of this Observatory. The work was broadened under his direction so as to include seismic and atmospheric-electric observations, the Observatory becoming in time a geophysical branch of the Munich Astronomical Observatory. To Messerschmitt is due the careful magnetic survey of Bavaria and the organization of its seismological work.

Not alone in the duties and observations of the positions occupied by Messerschmitt did his ability and energy show themselves. He belonged to many societies and organizations, in all of which he took a very active and prominent part, as treasurer, secretary, or as an active committee member. He is author of numerous publications, both scientific and popular. Whatever he undertook received his devoted care and unceasing enthusiasm.¹

PRINCIPAL MAGNETIC STORMS RECORDED AT THE
CHELTENHAM MAGNETIC OBSERVATORY.

OCTOBER 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 1912.

Latitude 38° 44'.0N; Longitude 76° 50'.5, or 5^h 07^m.4 W. of Greenwich.

GREENWICH MEAN TIME				RANGE		
Beginning		Ending		D (Declination)	H (Hor'l Int.)	Z (Vert'l Int.)
1912	h		h			
Oct.	13, 22	Oct.	15, 7	22.6	93	50
Nov.	14, 6	Nov.	14, 23	23.5	71	22
Dec.	6, 13	Dec.	7, 18	21.4	76	30
Dec.	22, 8	Dec.	23, 22	15.4	76	25

GEORGE HARTNELL, *Observer-in-Charge.*

O. H. TITTMANN, *Superintendent,
Coast and Geodetic Survey.*

NOTES

1. *Concerning observed and computed moments of inertia of magnets.* Referring to pp. 45-46 and 156-158, vol. 17, of this Journal, it may now be stated that, as the result of some recent careful weighings and measurements made by the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism using its strictly non-magnetic balance, the outstanding difference between the observed value of the moment of inertia of magnet H26 and the value, computed from the dimensions and mass, has been reduced to 1.1 parts in 1,000. The computed value is still, however, the higher one; the cause of the remaining difference is being further investigated.

2. *Office and Laboratory Building for the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism.* In addition to the appropriation for defraying the expenses

¹ This sketch prepared by Dr. H. M. W. Edmonds is based on Dr. C. W. Lutz's appreciation of the work of his former chief. (*Mit. d. Geog. Gesell., München*, 7. Bt., 1912, 3. Hft.)