

AT a time when wireless telegraphy is interesting scientists and puzzling the less-learned portion of humanity, Mr. J. J. Fahie's *History of Wireless Telegraphy*, published by Messrs. Blackwood, is issued at an appropriate moment. It will be startling news to the majority of readers to discover that the idea of wireless telegraphy is as nearly ancient history as is the system of the electric telegraph. The famous electrician, Professor D. E. Hughes—whose death has been announced since Mr. Fahie's book came from the press—wrote a letter to the author telling of some experiments he made over twenty years ago. He then succeeded in transmitting electric signals without connecting wires up to a distance of five hundred yards. The Professor avowed the results achieved to be due to actual aerial electric waves, which were undiscovered up to that time; but Sir George Stokes, who was one of the scientific witnesses of the tests, believed that they could be accounted for by known electro-magnetic induction effects. Professor Hughes was so disappointed at his failure to make Sir George Stokes believe, that he determined to say nothing about his discovery until he could give a perfect scientific demonstration of the existence of aerial electric waves. The eminent Hertz made public the result of his experiments about 1888, and then Professor Hughes thought it was too late to say anything about his own trials. What Hughes indicated, and Hertz improved upon, Marconi has perfected; yet it is practically certain that if Sir George Stokes had not thrown cold water on the aerial wave theory, the honour of being the discoverer of wireless telegraphy would have rested with the late Professor David Edward Hughes.

MR. HAROLD GORST, son of Sir John Gorst, is about to add to his literary laurels by the publication of a *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*. The work will be produced by Messrs. Blackie and Co., and will form a volume of the "Victorian Era Series," published by the well-known Edinburgh and London firm. Mr. Gorst will forestall Lord Rowton, whose

authorised life of the famous statesman, politician and novelist, is a long time in making its appearance. Of course Mr. Gorst is too young a man to be able to write from a personal knowledge of Lord Beaconsfield, and, therefore, his book must perforce be somewhat lacking in interest. But he wields a brilliant pen, and as he will have had the advantage of his father's reminiscences of the great Tory leader, the work is certain of appreciation. Mr. Gorst, who is one of the editors of a new weekly review, is also engaged upon a book dealing with England's interest in China.

THE Incorporated Society of Authors has inaugurated a scheme which is meeting with much attention and consideration from authors at Home. The proposal is to raise a sum of money which shall be used in the payment of pensions, and thus do away with the system of donations followed by the Society previously. The pensions are not to be less than £30 or more than £100 per annum, and they are not to be awarded to anyone who is under the age of sixty. They will be given for life, but in certain circumstances may be discontinued if the Committee of the Society should consider such a course desirable. Of the money raised for this pension scheme two-thirds will be added to the capital of the pension fund, while the remainder may be devoted to the payment of annuities to provide for the pensions granted. Some well-known writers have expressed themselves in favour of the scheme, and amongst those who have already sent in subscriptions are Mr. Anthony Hope, who has given £200, and Messrs. George Meredith, J. M. Barrie, Rudyard Kipling, Gilbert Parker, Douglas Freshfield and Sir Walter Besant, who have each donated £100. Then a large number of literary men have promised annual subscriptions to the fund, so there is no doubt that the object meets with general approval. The cordial response made by successful authors shows the "fellow feeling which makes us wondrous kind."