

It is desirable that the calculations made by any one of the bureaux should be communicated to other bureaux, which have to use them at least three years in advance.

The above conventions will be put in force in such a way as to be complete in 1917.

It is understood that the above arrangements are provisional, subject to approval by the Governments concerned.

THE SOLAR PHYSICS OBSERVATORY.

WE take the following from Wednesday's *Times* (November 29):—

At the Congregation on Thursday, December 7, the following Graces will be offered to the Senate:—"That the recommendations contained in the report, dated November 13, 1911, of the Council of the Senate on the proposed transference of the Solar Physics Observatory to Cambridge—namely, (1) that the University accept the charge of the Solar Physics Observatory, subject to the conditions laid down in the letter from the President of the Board of Education; (2) that steps be taken to obtain the powers requisite for the suspension of the election to the Plumian professorship of astronomy and experimental philosophy when it next becomes vacant, for a time sufficient to enable the University, if necessary, to obtain changes in the statutes which define the title of the professorship and the duties of the professor—be approved."

The proposal to transfer the Solar Physics Observatory to Cambridge was discussed in the Senate last Thursday. The proposal was warmly welcomed by Prof. Newall, Prof. Sir George Darwin, Prof. Sir Robert Ball, and Dr. Glaisher. The arrangements for organising the work of the department and for the provision of the necessary site were fully explained.

Nothing seems to have been said about the financial arrangements necessary to secure permanence. In the report of the so-called Departmental Committee the following passage occurs:—

With a view to securing the permanence of any arrangement that may now be made, the committee desire to point out the importance of attaching the directorship of the Solar Observatory, if established at Cambridge, to a professorship which is not merely of a temporary character. The University may not be in a position, at present, to give any definite assurance that the professorship will be renewed at the expiration of the present tenure; but we consider it highly desirable that the Government should ascertain, before coming to a final decision, whether the University is willing at an early opportunity to consider favourably the establishment of a professorship of astrophysics on a permanent foundation.

The "permanence" contemplated by the Council of the Senate only becomes operative on the death or resignation of the present Plumian professor. It is taken for granted that the unpaid professorship of astrophysics will not be vacated for any cause in the interval. What is to happen during a vacancy is not stated. Is this the kind of "permanence" contemplated by the Government? Is the next vacation of the Plumian professorship, which everybody hopes will not occur for many years, the "early opportunity" referred to in the report of the committee?

NOTES.

FOLLOWING on the announcement last week of the appointment of an expert committee of investigation into the etiology, &c., of foot-and-mouth disease comes the interesting and, if it should be confirmed, important announcement of the discovery of the causal organism of this serious animal scourge. This claim has been put forward by a German bacteriologist, Dr. Siegel, in a paper read at the annual Congress of Prussian Veterinary Surgeons in Berlin. Dr. Siegel claims to have found the

organism in the blood stream and in the local lesions in affected animals, to have cultivated it in artificial media, and that in experimenting with his organism it has satisfied the postulates of Koch. Moreover, he claims to be able to produce some degree of immunity to the disease. Details of this interesting paper are not yet to hand; and in the meantime the claim must be accepted with the reserve which must obviously be accorded to the statement of the discovery of an organism that has up to the present eluded vigorous and systematic research by other experts of almost all nationalities. In the meantime, the full details of experiments will be anxiously awaited; and if they warrant it, it will be one of the first duties of the British expert committee to investigate them carefully, and either to confirm or refute the claims of Dr. Siegel. Should the discovery be confirmed, it will indeed be an enormous boon to the whole agricultural world.

THE Bradshaw lecture is to be delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons on December 6 by Mr. R. Clement Lucas, who has chosen for his subject "Some Points in Heredity."

THE Paris correspondent of *The Times* reports that Prince Roland Bonaparte has placed at the disposal of the French Academy of Sciences a sum of 10,000*l.*, which is to serve as a fund in aid of those of its members who are engaged in research work.

THE superintendent of the Indian Museum informs us that Mr. J. Coggin Brown, curator of the museum of the Geological Survey of India, accompanies the Abor expedition as geologist. The botanical work is in the hands of Mr. I. H. Burkill, reporter on economic products to the Government of India, while Mr. Stanley Kemp, assistant superintendent in the Indian Museum, is in charge of both zoology and anthropology, with Mr. R. Hodgart as taxidermist and assistant.

THE ringing of birds in order to study their movements has been referred to frequently in these columns. About twenty thousand birds have been ringed by correspondents of *British Birds*, the rings bearing the name of the editor of that journal, Mr. Witherby. One of these birds, a sea snipe, or redshank, was shot recently at Wespport, County Mayo, and it was assumed to be a bird escaped from captivity in London. A report in *The Times* of November 29 says:—"The incident has caused much local interest, since nobody in Connaught has ever heard of a tame redshank. It has among seabirds the reputation of being remarkably shy." Local opinion in Connaught as to the difficulty of taming a redshank need not be disturbed. The bird referred to was probably ringed by one of Mr. Witherby's correspondents far away from London, and it is unlikely that it was ever in a cage.

LIEUT.-COLONEL EDGAR A. MEARNS, U.S.A., retired, associate zoologist of the United States National Museum, who accompanied the Smithsonian Expedition to Africa, under the direction of Colonel Theo. Roosevelt, will be attached as naturalist to the Childs Frick Abyssinian Expedition, which will sail from London shortly to make natural history collections in the Abyssinian region. It is proposed to make as complete a collection of the animals of the Abyssinian region as possible. The journey will be primarily through Abyssinia, but will extend into British East Africa as well, and cover a portion of that country north of the field gone over by Colonel Roosevelt in 1909-10. One of the most important regions to be visited is in the neighbourhood of Lake Rudolf, and along the shores of the lake itself. It is expected that the opera-