

CHEMISTS IN CONFERENCE.

THE Society of Chemical Industry held its annual meeting in London on July 15-18, and, in order to emphasise the fact that its outlook is industrial rather than academic, the conferences took place in the City, and not, as hitherto, in South Kensington. The opening meeting was held at the Mansion House, and the society was welcomed by the Lord Mayor; other conferences were held at the Salters' Hall, Goldsmiths' Hall, and Clothworkers' Hall, and the foreign delegates were privileged to lunch in the picturesque and old-world hall of the Girdlers' Company.

It has already been announced in these columns that an Inter-Allied Chemical Council has been formed for the promotion of co-operation between the chemists of Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy, and the United States. During the last year or so there has also grown into existence an International Research Council, which has met in Rome and Paris, and is this week holding an important conference in Brussels. This council contemplates the organisation of research and publication in all branches of science and in all countries, except Germany and Austria, and there was a good deal of discussion among the British and Allied chemists at their conferences last week as to how the Inter-Allied Council could fit into the scheme of organisation contemplated by the International Research Council. It was at length decided to announce that the Inter-Allied Chemical Council was of opinion that this body should be the chemical section of the International Research Council, and should do all the work of organisation and publication which was required in connection with chemistry, both pure and applied. A deputation was sent to Brussels to express this view and to co-operate with the other *savants* there assembled. Amongst the delegates to Brussels we may mention Prof. Chavanne, Dr. Lucion, and M. Timmermans, representing Belgium; Profs. Moureu and Béhal, representing France; Sir William Pope and Dr. Ruttan (of Canada), representing the British Empire; and Lt.-Col. Bartow, Dr. Parsons, and Dr. Washburn, representing the United States. It is understood that Canada and Poland have expressed a wish to be represented on the Inter-Allied Chemical Council, and are now admitted as such, and that the other Allies who have signed the Treaty of Peace will be asked to become constituent bodies.

Among the papers read at the Mansion House on July 15 was a very eloquent and interesting appreciation of the late Sir William Ramsay by Prof. C. Moureu, the president of the Inter-Allied Council. Prof. Moureu described the researches of the late Lord Rayleigh on the density of nitrogen, and gave an account of the excitement produced at the British Association at Oxford in 1894 when Lord Rayleigh and Sir William Ramsay announced their discovery of argon. He mentioned as characteristic of Sir William Ramsay the speed with which he followed up a hint given in a letter from Sir Henry Miers as to a gas contained in cleveite and detected by Hillebrand. This led to the discovery of helium, which was spectroscopically detected in the sun so long ago as 1868.

Prof. Moureu gave some account of his own original work on the occurrence of helium in fire-damp and in the gases given off by underground springs, and sketched the history of the discovery of neon, krypton, and xenon. Only those who have paid attention to the recent publications are aware that helium occurs to the extent of 6 per cent. in the gases given off by the spring at Maizières, in the Côte d'Or, and to the extent of 10 per cent. in the gas of the spring at

Santenay, also in the Côte d'Or. Moreover, krypton, argon, xenon, and neon are usually found in the subterranean gases, and the relative proportions of these four gases are fairly constant. The explanation is suggested that these gases, being chemically inactive, have remained in a constant proportion since the days when our globe was a nebular mass without form and void. It was Sir William Ramsay himself who predicted the use of helium for filling balloons—a prediction which has been recently verified by the work done in the United States under the superintendence of Dr. Cottrell.

An important conference on the production and consumption of sugar within the British Empire was held at the Clothworkers' Hall, the Earl of Denbigh being in the chair. A number of experts took part in the discussion, and a voluminous report is now being prepared for publication.

A group of papers on power plant in chemical works occupied a whole day; these included a paper on waste heat boilers by Capt. C. J. Goodwin and a paper on surface combustion boilers by Prof. W. A. Bone and Mr. P. Kirke. Several speakers directed attention to possible economies in the use of fuel—a matter which is now of the utmost importance to the whole nation.

The conference on dyestuffs was largely attended, and a paper by Dr. Herbert Levinstein on the intimate connection between the German dye manufactures and the supply of explosives and poison gases should make our politicians think furiously. Germany, notwithstanding the Treaty of Peace, is left in the position that she can easily, at a few hours' notice, commence the manufacture of explosives and poison gas on a very large scale. In this country we have at the moment no manufacture which can proceed during peace and at once be switched on to war-like purposes. Mr. E. V. Evans, in his paper on the manufacture of intermediate products in the dyestuff industry, showed how desirable it is to conduct the manufacture of these in a few works on a large scale rather than, as now, the manufacture on a small scale in many works.

There were good papers on other topics dealing, perhaps, with rather technical matters, and a number of papers on chrome tanning and on recent developments in the fermentation industries, including one by Sir Frederick Nathan on the manufacture of acetone.

Industrial chemistry is becoming too large a subject for any individual to master, and the tendency to specialise is manifested, not only in the grouping of a number of cognate papers into one conference, but also in the activities of the recently formed chemical engineering group of the society. On the whole, the papers were of considerable importance, and show that, though the chemists may be tired by their war-work, they are not exhausted.

PHYSIOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS.

A JOINT session of the Aristotelian Society, the British Psychological Society, and the Mind Association has been held annually, though more or less informally, since 1908. This year an attractive and more extended programme was provided on July 11-14, and hospitality was offered by Bedford College, the most delightfully situated and admirably appointed of the University of London colleges. The result was a very large increase in the membership and a sustained interest in the session. Members were furnished in advance with the whole of the written communications constituting the Proceedings. This