

held at the British Empire Exhibition on June 3, for which the various Conference Halls have been placed at the disposal of the convening bodies by the Exhibition authorities.

At the annual general meeting of the Institution of Automobile Engineers, held on March 25, Dr. W. R. Ormandy was elected president for the session 1924-25. Messrs. L. H. Hounsfeld, B. W. Shilson, H. Kerr Thomas, and C. Wheeler have been elected vice-presidents.

MR. J. H. THOMAS, Secretary of State for the Colonies, replying to a question in the House of Commons on Monday, March 31, stated that the Government had decided that in the scheme for the reorganisation of the Imperial Institute, the exhibition galleries of the Institute should be kept open. This decision had been made in view of representations and promises of financial support from certain Dominions, and of a very generous offer from Viscount Cowdray to contribute 5000*l.* a year towards the cost of the galleries. A Bill to give effect to this decision, and to the other recommendations of the Imperial Economic Conference regarding the Imperial Institute, is to be submitted to Parliament.

ENGINEER-CAPT. E. C. SMITH, R.N. (ret.), who is well known as a lecturer and writer on the history of engineering, has been appointed guide lecturer at the Science Museum, South Kensington, and took up his duties there on April 1. In the years 1921, 1922, Capt. Smith contributed to NATURE a weekly Calendar of Scientific and Industrial Pioneers which was much appreciated by many readers. Visitors to the Museum will be conducted around the various collections at 12 noon and 3 P.M. on each week-day according to a programme which will be varied from time to time. At present only the collections which

are exhibited in the Old Buildings, Aeronautical Collection, and selected groups of the Science Collections, are available, but as galleries of the new Museum building are completed and occupied the conducted tours will be extended to these also.

NEARLY two years ago, the Society of Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress appointed a special medical research committee "to consider critically the physiological and psychological reactions of various methods of control." The personnel of the Committee includes the medical vice-presidents of this Society and other medical and scientific members selected to represent various points of view. The members of the Committee are: Sir James Barr, Sir William Bayliss, Mr. Harold Chapple, Dr. Jane Hawthorne, Mr. Geo. Jones, Dr. Maude Kerslake, Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane, Sir John MacAlister, Sir Archdall Reid, Dr. Christopher Rolleston, Dr. D. Sommerville, Dr. Marie C. Stopes, Dr. H. M. Telling, Dr. Mather Thomson, and Mr. E. B. Turner. In accordance with the objects of its foundation, the Committee has considered a variety of current affairs concerning contraception, but its proceedings and minutes are strictly confidential and none of its deliberations are published, except about points which are specially passed for publication. At the last meeting of the Committee the following resolution was passed for publication in suitable quarters: "The Medical Research Committee of the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress wishes to place on record its joint and several opinion that the methods now used at the Mothers' Clinic are the best known at the present time." Communications from any one desiring to bring matters for discussion before the Committee, or to present scientific results for its consideration, will be welcomed by the Hon. Secretary, C.B.C., 7 John Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.2.

Our Astronomical Column.

OCCULTATIONS OF ALDEBARAN.—This, the brightest star in Taurus, and situated in the group called the Hyades, will be hidden by the moon on four occasions during the present year, namely:

	Disappears.	Reappears.
April 8 . . .	8.47 P.M.	9.33 P.M.
June 29 . . .	3.20 P.M.	4.20 P.M.
August 23 . . .	4.7 A.M.	4.56 A.M.
October 16 . . .	7.37 P.M.	8.22 P.M.

Three of these phenomena will be easily observable if the condition of the atmosphere is suitable. But that in June will require a good telescope, as it occurs in the strong sunshine of the early afternoon.

Occurrences of this kind are of great interest to the amateur astronomer. When an occultation of Aldebaran occurs at night the star may be watched with the unaided eye until the moon approaches very close to it. In fact, the disappearance of the star might be observed without instrumental aid by persons who possess acute vision, but only on occasions when the moon happens to be in a crescent form. When either gibbous or full, the light from the moon is so strong as to overpower that of the star, and a field-glass or small telescope is necessary to enable the occurrence to be witnessed.

MERCURY.—The most favourable appearance of Mercury during the year will occur in April within the fortnight April 7-21. The planet sets more than two hours after the sun during the greater part of this period and may be viewed after sunset over the W.N.W. horizon.

It is often stated that Mercury can be observed only with great difficulty, but this is scarcely true, for when an observer can command a good open view of the horizon and the weather is suitable, the planet may be recognised with comparative ease. Its brightness is quite equal to, and sometimes exceeds, that of a first magnitude star, so it is not too faint to be seen; in fact, a person with inferior sight may distinguish the planet if he knows exactly where to look and surveys the sky at a time when the air is suitable for his purpose. That Mercury is not often seen in England is attributable to the circumstance that clouds are very prevalent in this country and particularly so near the horizon. Should any difficulty be experienced in finding the planet, it will be desirable to search along the horizon with an opera or field glass of low power. The object will probably soon be detected in this way, and may afterwards be glimpsed with the unaided eye and followed until it sets if the air is fairly free from the mist or fog which often floats about at low altitudes.