

Centenary of the Zoological Society of London.

THE annual gathering of the Zoological Society of London to receive the Council's report was held on Monday last, April 29, at the meeting room in the Gardens at Regent's Park. The occasion signalled the centenary of establishment of the Society by Royal Charter in 1829. Following this compliance with precedent and duty, a centenary celebration, extended and exceptional in character, took place in the Great Hall of University College, the Duke of Bedford, the Society's president, occupying the chair. In the evening a private complimentary dinner was held elsewhere, at which foreign and official guests were present, including the Prince of Wales.

The Zoological Society itself, as an organised body carrying diverse and onerous responsibilities, has deserved well in endeavour during its centenary existence; its gardens, moreover, as a prime and essential feature of the original scheme, have long constituted a household word inseparable from national thought and concern. But the story of initiation of effort is somewhat older than the century implied by the charter date, 1829, and is comparable, we think, with the early beginnings of other scientific societies which sprang up at the threshold of the Victorian era. There were influences tending towards corporate association, such as British exploratory activity, the arrival of natural history specimens, and new views attaching to zoological studies. The Linnean Society, instituted in 1788, could not, as time went on, fully satisfy the requirements of zoology. In such circumstances, a group of members of that body conceived the idea, in 1822, of establishing a Zoological Club, the object of which should be "the study of zoology and comparative anatomy in all their branches, and more especially as they relate to the animals indigenous to Great Britain and Ireland." The meetings were held in Soho Square, at the former residence of Sir Joseph Banks (who had died in 1820) and home of the Linnean Society.

The Club accomplished much important work before its dissolution in 1829. Engaged in the advancement and recognition of zoology, the members were mutually cognisant of the outstanding achievements of Sir Stamford Raffles, the distinguished British colonial governor in Eastern lands, and of the unique and extensive zoological collections he had brought together. On returning permanently to England in 1824, Sir Stamford suggested to Sir Humphry Davy, the president of the Royal Society, a plan for the formation of a zoological society which should combine with the pursuit of science the introduction and domestication of such quadrupeds, birds, and fishes as might be most likely to prove useful for agricultural and domestic purposes.

Early in 1825 a circular announcement was made of a proposal to establish a society the object of which would be to attempt the introduction of new races of quadrupeds, birds, or fishes, applicable to purposes of utility, either in our farm yards,

gardens, woods, waters, lakes, or rivers; and to connect with this object a general zoological collection of prepared specimens." The name of Sir Stamford Raffles occurs in this circular, as well as, it is interesting to note, that of the Duke of Bedford. Writing round about this date to his cousin, Sir Stamford says: "I am much interested at present in establishing a grand zoological collection in the metropolis. . . . Sir Humphry Davy and myself are the projectors, and while he looks more to the practical and immediate utility to the country gentlemen, my attention is more directed to the scientific department; . . . it is further expected we may go far beyond the Jardin des Plantes at Paris." Here, adverting again to the members of the Zoological Club, it was afterwards (1829) put on record that it was in the impulse originally given by their exertions to the propagation of science, more particularly by laying the foundation of the Zoological Society, that their agency could be traced in principles and objects.

The scheme outlined briefly above, wide in its interests, and to be regulated by laws drawn up with the concurrence of the members, met with a cordial reception, and by this time (1826) Sir Stamford Raffles was an active, and in all probability dominant, personality in the difficult procedure of inauguration. Wisely, the decision was taken to draft a report on the present state and progress of natural history, especially zoology, with an account of the institutions which supplied encouragement on the Continent, and showing the necessity of some similar establishment in Great Britain. Next, application was made to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests for a grant of land from the Crown. Looking back, we may perhaps picture some perturbation of the official mind respecting so novel a proposition. However, all went well, and finally space was allotted in the great demesne of Regent's Park.

The first general meeting of the Society was held on April 29, 1826, when Sir Stamford Raffles was unanimously elected president. He read an introductory address reviewing the position of zoological studies; detailing also the objects and plans of the embryo institution. Soon after, there occurred, on July 5, the death from apoplexy, at the early age of forty-five, of this notable president and man of affairs. Sir Humphry Davy, in offering tribute, said of him that "having lost one splendid collection by fire he instantly commenced the formation of another; and having brought this to Europe, he made it not private, but public property, and placed it entirely at the disposal of a new association for the promotion of zoology, of which he had been chosen president by acclamation." The following year the Marquess of Lansdowne was elected to the presidential chair, retiring in 1831. The fellowship roll comprised then 2000 names. In 1829 the crowning of effort came in the grant of a charter by King George IV.

Through limitations of space we must leave at

this point reference to the activities of the immediately succeeding years as regards both the Gardens and the Society. Some idea, however, of the achievements which had marked the close of the nineteenth century can be formed by a perusal of Mr. H. Sherren's interesting volume on the Zoological Society.

The establishment enjoyed special advantages during the secretaryship of Dr. P. L. Sclater, covering forty-three years. Since then the zealous

and enterprising work of Dr. P. Chalmers Mitchell has brought the Society to its present distinctive and high position among the zoological societies of the world. As regards staff, it is significant that two women now hold office, respectively, as curator of reptiles and curator of insects. Recently, the Society has acquired Whipsnade Park, on the borders of the Chilterns, a derelict estate, destined for conversion into a zoological park, open to visitors.

News and Views.

BRITISH chemical manufacture since 1913 has not only made rapid strides which have brought it into a position of commercial eminence and have kept it abreast of world-wide development, but it has also, at least so far as its leaders are concerned, taken care to consolidate the ground gained and to prepare for further progress by the establishment and endowment of research work. At a public meeting arranged by the British Science Guild at the Mansion House on April 24, an account of which appears elsewhere in this issue, Lord Melchett, Sir Frederick Keeble, Mr. A. B. Shearer, and Mr. F. H. Carr showed something of the immensity of the contribution which chemical manufacture is making, especially in Great Britain, to the welfare and prosperity of the people. The attention of the recipients is of course distracted at the moment by discussions and political promises of employment, industrial prosperity, peace, and social service. Perhaps it was fortuitous, but more probably inevitable, that the very same phrases were used, not of ideals, but of solid accomplishments, by the speakers. The artificial silk industry has already, directly or indirectly, given employment to hundreds of thousands of workers; creating its own demand, it has often brought a touch of colour and beauty where there was little that was not drab and formless, and it has probably not been without influence where of late years a notable increase in self-respect and self-confidence has been apparent. The nitrogen industry, in time of war a sharp sword for which the British Empire reached too late, has since been beaten into a ploughshare, which is already firmly harnessed to man's ever-increasing material needs, so that the fear of nitrogen-hunger has been completely dissolved. The drug industry has already been enabled in a multitude of homes to give health where but the spark of life remained, to free the mind from the assaults of the body, and to raise barriers between whole communities and the menace of disease.

ALL this has been made possible by basing commercial acumen and technical skill on a firm foundation of fundamental research. The chemical industry is a structure which must be designed elastically, in order that it may rest securely and continue to grow on a base which is not only continually extending, but also may at times be found deceptive in its appearance, as researchers probe more and more deeply into the origin and meaning of things. It is to the credit of British industry and to that of the State that provision has been made for such investi-

gations to be carried on both in the industrial and in more purely academic laboratories. Scientific research of many kinds is even more than a base; it is a frame whereby existing industries are kept virile and progressive, and around which may be built a new industry. We cannot enter into a discussion regarding the precise relation of our chemical industries to the various articles of political faith, but we can at least point out three ways in which individual or political action can help to maintain our industry and pave the way for further successful advances. We hope that our fellow-citizens will never permit themselves to forget the vital position which modern chemical manufacture occupies, not only in determining the prosperity of nations, but also in alleviating human suffering and in increasing the comforts of life. Further, we hope that they will use their influence, in whatever way seems to them proper and effective, to secure that those industries shall be nurtured in their infancy, fed with men and women of sound training, and encouraged in their growth. Finally, although we should not contemplate with equanimity an entire Cabinet of chemists, we hope that the experience and advice of our pioneers in science and the scientific foundation of industry may be given yet greater weight in the counsels of the nation.

A LARGE and representative assembly attended the centenary celebration of the Zoological Society, held on Monday last in the Great Hall of University College, London. The Duke of Bedford, president of the Society, occupied the chair, supported by members of Council and those who were designated to convey congratulations on behalf of British and foreign countries. In his introductory remarks the president extended grateful thanks to the delegates who had come from many parts of the world to offer good wishes in person, and express their appreciation of the Society's long continuity of effort. Dr. P. Chalmers Mitchell, secretary, gave an epitome of the scientific work which had engaged the attention of the Society. He emphasised that the institution was founded by scientific men, and that their aim was not to be merely exhibitors of animals and entertainers of the public. The Society has an obligation to advance zoological studies and is fully mindful of it. In parasitology much has been done of practical importance to men and animals. An interesting summary was given by Dr. Mitchell of the work of the prosector's department. Through the publications of the Society a great body