

An International Committee on the History of Sciences.

THERE was recently held in Paris the first meeting of the Comité International d'Histoire des Sciences, which owes its existence to the International Congress of Historians. At the meeting of that body last year at Oslo, the first steps were taken towards the formation of the new Comité. Most benevolent and practical interest in the Comité International has been evinced by the permanent office of the parent body, and especially by its distinguished secretary, M. l'Héritier. It is consonant with our experience of other intellectual movements that the stimulus towards studies on the history of science has come not from governments nor even from universities, but from voluntary associations of individual workers. As the heroic figure of the movement for the study of the history of science, we may cite Dr. George Sarton, a Belgian who is now domiciled in the United States. His self-sacrificing industry was interrupted but not deflected by the European upheaval. He has now the satisfaction of watching the growth of the History of Science Society, which has honoured itself by contributing some part of the cost of Sarton's remarkable journal *Isis*. The History of Science Society has its centre in Washington. It numbers many Europeans among its members, and welcomes all who take interest in the history of science.

The newly-formed Comité International d'Histoire des Sciences has its seat in Paris. The Comité itself will consist exclusively of persons actively engaged in investigating problems within the field of the history of science and technology. It will comprise 30 *membres effectifs* and 50 *membres correspondants*. They will meet annually in Paris, while every three years they will hold larger international congresses. The Comité is of course in active co-operation with the larger History of Science Society, to which all of its members belong, and there is no sort of rivalry between the two bodies.

The first president of the Comité International d'Histoire des Sciences is the very distinguished Italian mathematician and writer on the history of mathematics, Prof. Gino Loria of Genoa. The honorary secretary is Prof. Aldo Mieli, distinguished both for his own writings on the history of science and for the journal *Archeion* edited and published by him. The success of the recent Paris meeting of the Comité was mainly due to the admirable organisation of Prof. Mieli.

The French Government has allotted to the Comité a beautiful home in the Hôtel Nevers, a seventeenth century house which formerly belonged to Mme. de Lambert and afterwards held the first nucleus of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Here Prof. Mieli is organising

a Centre International d'Histoire des Sciences, in which he will be assisted by Mme. Hélène Metzger, author of important contributions to the history of chemistry and physics. Madame Metzger will act as archivist and librarian.

In the Hôtel Nevers the members of the Comité recently assembled, the constitution of the Comité was agreed upon, and a number of most interesting papers were read. Among them were contributions both by the president and by Prof. Ruska of Berlin on the importance of Arabic manuscripts for the study of the history of mathematics; by Prof. Thorndike of Columbia University, president of the History of Science Society, on a treatise on surgery ascribed both to John Braccia and to Peter of Tossignano; by Prof. Mieli on Spallanzani and his relationship to Redi and to Pasteur; by Prof. Dingler of Munich on Nicholas of Oresmes; by Prof. Darmstaedter of Munich on his remarkable experiments to elucidate the formation of copper and silver alloys described in ancient treatises of alchemy; by Prof. Sigerist of Leipzig on the organisation of medical historical research; and by Dr. Feldhaus of Berlin on his Institute for the History of Technology. Prof. Vetter of Prague described the holograph manuscript of the "De Revolutionibus Orbium Celestium" of Copernicus, now at Prague. He discussed the interesting divergences between the manuscript and the first printed edition, and it was agreed that the manuscript should if possible be published in facsimile as an important historical document.

One session, attended by many distinguished visitors, was devoted to a commemoration of the work of the late Paul Tannery, who not only himself made important contributions to the history of science, but also, so early as 1903, at the International Congress of Historians in Rome, foreshadowed the creation of a permanent international body for the study of the history of science.

Paris opened its hospitable doors to the Comité. A dinner was given by the parent Comité International des Sciences Historiques, and a reception by the Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle. The latter was the occasion of an eloquent address by the assistant director of the Institut, Prof. Alfred Zimmern, who expressed the hope that, through the history of science and cognate synthetic movements, it might be possible for the mind of the savant to exercise its legitimate influence in the international comity of nations.

Dr. Charles Singer was elected president of the Comité International d'Histoire des Sciences for the next two years, and it was decided to hold an international congress in London in 1931.

Meteorology in British East Africa.

THE first *Memoir* of what is to be known as the British East African Meteorological Service, from the pen of its director, Mr. A. Walter, formerly director of the Royal Alfred Observatory, Mauritius, has recently been received. This memoir describes the circumstances leading up to the inauguration of a joint meteorological service for British East African territories. The money for the undertaking is to be contributed by the Governments of Egypt, the Sudan and Zanzibar, and those of the East African colonies Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, and Northern Rhodesia; the Egyptian Government is intimately concerned with the acquisition of meteorological information from the East African uplands, the rainfall of which controls the Nile flow, and not inappropriately makes

the largest financial contribution. For many years records of rainfall and temperature have been collected by the agricultural departments of Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar, and Tanganyika possessed a fully organised meteorological service when under German rule.

The new service begins with funds amounting to nearly £7000 a year and is able to undertake a comparatively ambitious programme involving the organisation of five 'first order' stations, where the work will include electrical and magnetic observations, measurements of solar radiation, and the exploration of upper wind currents by means of pilot balloons. In addition, there will be about forty 'second order' telegraphic reporting stations, at which observations