

of the University, discovering argon and helium in his laboratory at University College; Jeans, a member of the present Senate, peering over the edge of the universe. . . .

We do not suggest that the architect of the new University building should attempt to recapture—in Bloomsbury—the last enchantments of the Middle Age. If he succeeds in capturing the spirit of the present age, he will deserve his niche in the Pantheon of architects. Questions of style apart, air, sunlight, and accessibility are crucial in considering the design. Is it wise, from these viewpoints, to build a single huge building, possibly the largest in London, a break-air, if the word may be coined? Science has not yet discovered any effective method of ventilating a great building with numerous wings—witness the Houses of Parliament. On this question it is possible to appeal to expert opinion. Three distinguished architects in their lay-outs for the site have provided a forecourt and abundant internal air space.

Mr. H. V. Lanchester's sketch of "the University of the Future" showed a forecourt flanked by offices and library and facing the hall and institutes with a dome and two graceful towers. Prof. A. E. Richardson, professor of architecture in the Uni-

versity, adopted a somewhat similar lay-out in a brilliant impromptu sketch, the forecourt facing the Great Hall, not crowned with a dome or tower, a feature he regarded as wasteful and unnecessary. Prof. S. D. Adshead, professor of town planning in the University, prepared a sketch showing an open space running through the site north and south, broken only by arches. He did not consider there was sufficient space for a Great Hall. "Should a great hall ever be built in the neighbourhood," he said in a paper read to the Town Planning Institute (April 29, 1927), "I think it should occupy one of the adjoining residential blocks." This view has been endorsed by Mr. Holden, who has sited the Hall on the part of the site facing Russell Square. All these architects have recognised the importance of Sir John Burnet's columned northern extension of the British Museum in relation to the University building. Mr. Holden's design presents to this frontage of the Museum the least dignified part of its anatomy, as will be seen from the photograph. Whatever else may happen, this should be rectified. We should prefer, however, that the idea of a single great building should be abandoned and an alternative design adopted treating the problem in a more free and characteristic way. T. LL. H.

### News and Views

#### Sir Joseph Larmor, F.R.S.

SIR JOSEPH LARMOR, whose resignation of the Lucasian professorship of mathematics in the University of Cambridge is announced, succeeded Sir George Gabriel Stokes in the chair in 1903. Stokes had been elected so long ago as 1849, and one of the early acts of his successor was to edit his "Scientific Correspondence" (2 volumes, 1907). After being Senior Wrangler in 1880 and first Smith's Prizeman, Mr. Larmor (he was knighted in 1909) was elected to a fellowship in St. John's College and was appointed professor of mathematics at Galway, but in 1885 he returned to Cambridge as College and University lecturer in mathematics. "Æther and Matter" appeared in 1900, and his election as secretary of the Royal Society in 1901 (he had been a fellow since 1892) was a recognition of his eminence as a mathematical physicist. Scientific papers have continued to flow from his pen since 1881 or before, but the long-hoped-for treatise on electrodynamic theory did not materialise. The works of many younger men, however, clearly show the inspiration which they derived from his lectures. In 1929 the Cambridge University Press published two handsome volumes of "Mathematical and Physical Papers", with Sir Joseph's own comments in the form of notes and appendices; a glance at the table of contents will give an idea of his enormous range of interests. In addition, his frequent letters in NATURE and elsewhere, though as a rule not easy to understand, have always been worth serious consideration.

THOSE who were privileged to be present will not readily forget the inimitable, racy address which

Sir Joseph gave in the Arts School in Cambridge at the Clerk Maxwell Celebration in October 1931; it was quite different from the paper, "The Scientific Environment of Clerk Maxwell", published in the Commemoration Volume, and this in turn is only an extract from a more extended investigation into the historical origins of thermodynamics and the kinetic theory which, it is hoped, will soon be published. One of the duties of the Lucasian professor, as of the other professors of mathematics in Cambridge, is the reading of the essays submitted year by year for the Smith's Prizes; and thus Sir Joseph has kept constantly in touch with the best of the younger Cambridge mathematicians. Perhaps he has occasionally been a little out of sympathy with some of the recent developments in pure mathematics, but he has always been ready with advice and encouragement; in particular, the succession of Isaac Newton Students have reason to bless his name. From 1911 until 1922, Sir Joseph sat as member of Parliament for the University of Cambridge, and other administrative duties, in the University and elsewhere, have been thrust upon him and conscientiously discharged. A congenial office has been his chairmanship, in the absence of the Vice-Chancellor, of the Observatory Syndicate and the Solar Physics Committee in Cambridge; he always seems thoroughly to enjoy presiding over the body of distinguished men of science who assemble once a year to lunch with the professor of astrophysics and discuss the affairs of the Solar Physics Observatory. It is to be hoped that Sir Joseph's retirement from his professorship will not mean his leaving Cambridge, for his College and the University can still profit by his services.