

Museums Association

ANNUAL CONFERENCE AT LEEDS

THE forty-seventh annual conference of the Museums Association was held at Leeds on July 6-10. The meetings were held in the Museum, and the usual trade exhibition and members' exhibits were in the entrance hall of the Art Gallery. The conference attracted a record attendance; more than three hundred members and delegates met under the presidency of Sir Eric Maclagan, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Sir Eric, in his presidential address on "Museums and the Public", gave a summary of the various services afforded children and adults by the museums. He is not convinced that children's museums, as separate entities, are a wise ideal, and preferred that children's exhibits should constitute a bait rather than a permanent diet. He would like to see the abolition of many petty restrictions upon adults, such as the ban upon walking-sticks and umbrellas; yet, on the other hand, there is the danger of coddling the public owing to the excellent seats, gardens, refreshment rooms and guide lecturers now at the service of the visitor. Too little, perhaps, is being left to the public, and museums are not peep-shows and need not degenerate into them. In view of the little that museums do which has any real news value, Sir Eric thinks that great credit should be given to the newspapers, which are so often among the museum's best friends.

Following the presidential address, Col. Kitson Clark told the interesting story of the various Leeds museums and the persons responsible for their foundation. The morning session concluded with an address by Sir Harry Lindsay, director of the Imperial Institute, upon the various methods of visual instruction developed and used for adults and children in the Institute.

In the afternoon, Mr. F. R. Worts, headmaster of the City of Leeds School, dealt with museums and secondary schools, a subject which elicited a lively

discussion, from which it was apparent that too much is expected from the museums and too little co-operation offered by the schools. The session concluded with a somewhat detailed, but important, discussion on nomenclature in natural history collections, opened by Dr. F. J. North, and a description of the new Perth Museum and Art Gallery by its director, Mr. J. Ritchie, who illustrated his remarks with lantern slides and a cinematograph film.

The opening paper on Wednesday morning was by Mr. Leigh Ashton, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who described the display methods he used so successfully in arranging the recent Chinese Art Exhibition at Burlington House. He was followed by Mr. Philip Hendy, director of Leeds City Art Gallery, who had much to say about the lack of civic encouragement to art galleries. He deplored the lack of visual imagination at the present time and the tendency to "think in print". He regrets the decay of craftsmanship, and looks upon the art gallery as a remedy to industrialism, but he thinks that art galleries might profitably exhibit more manufactured objects. Mr. S. F. Markham followed with an account of the museums in India, based upon his recent survey, and the morning session concluded with an important discussion on the copyright of paintings in museums and art galleries.

Thursday morning was occupied largely by the annual general meeting but there was a vigorous discussion on the future of the Association. Finally Dr. Mortimer Wheeler read an account, by Mr. Iliffe of the folk museum movement in Palestine.

Excursions were made to various places of interest including Temple Newsam Mansion, Kirkstall Abbey, Harwood House and Fountains Abbey.

The new president of the Association is Alderman Charles Squire, of Leicester, and the next conference will be held at Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Society of Chemical Industry

ANNUAL MEETING AT LIVERPOOL

THE programme of the annual meeting of the Society of Chemical Industry at Liverpool, July 6-10, in itself provides an excellent illustration of the way in which chemical industry is linked up with almost every aspect of our national life, and of the extent to which chemical science enters into questions not only of industry but also of transport, food supply and the like.

The Messel Memorial Lecture, "Works as I have seen them Grow", delivered by Sir Robert Mond on July 8, gave an impressive account of the development of the Winnington works of Brunner, Mond and Co., as well as of the Mond Nickel Co. and the

Mond Gas Companies, which well illustrates the creative power of science in developing new industries or adapting old ones to changed conditions. It might also be regarded as a dissertation on the theme that the mental process of pure research, the way of asking Nature the right question and of obtaining adequate responses, is as applicable to applied as to pure science. Knowledge of progress depends on trustworthy and continuous measurements of all the many factors involved, and these measurements can be effected as well on a works as on a laboratory scale, and with intelligent designing no great or specially expensive methods are required. Acting on

this principle, Dr. Ludwig Mond not only made the Solvay ammonia-soda process a commercial and technical success, but also showed by what means the science of physical chemistry could be studied practically and developed in a works instead of in a laboratory.

Sir Robert Mond suggested that this was his father's great contribution to human progress, and those who took part in the numerous visits to works and factories during the week found much to justify Sir Robert's assertion. It was equally supported by papers presented to the meeting such as Dr. R. Houwink's address to the Plastics Group on "Synthetic Resins, their Formation, Properties and Possibilities", Dr. L. H. Lampitt's on "Food Package and the Consumer" at the Food Group Congress held jointly with the Royal Sanitary Institute at Southport, or Mr. R. G. Batson's address to the Road and Building Materials Group on "Scientific Research and the Highway Engineer".

All these papers and discussions emphasized the way in which exact measurements by physical methods are laying the foundations for future advance. Dr. Houwink, discussing future developments, said that one of the most urgent requirements is for stronger, more elastic, more shock resistant and electrically improved products, and referred to the possibility of improving the properties of shellac so that competition with resins like those of the phenol-formaldehyde type become possible again. Dr. Lampitt referred to the way in which growing public appreciation of the importance of hygiene has led to fresh demands for packing materials which the chemist has been able to meet.

The address for which the Liverpool meeting will be most remembered, however, is that of the president, Mr. W. A. S. Calder, on July 7, on "The Chemist as World Citizen". Mr. Calder linked up the chemist and his training to acquire and face facts with his wide responsibilities in the world to-day. One of the chief causes of the dangers to freedom and progress is the utter ignoring of facts, and Mr. Calder protested strongly that the chemist is not the destroyer which the irresponsible Press represents him to be. It is a lamentable fact, however, that we are all susceptible to the poisonous virus of newspaper propaganda. No one capable of thought can fail to admit that no one nation is ever entirely responsible for a war, and Mr. Calder pointed out that the training of a chemist should teach him the impossibility of being always right. Chemists cannot escape the responsibility of seeing that the danger of refusing to face facts is duly impressed upon our politicians.

Another direction in which the chemist can play a part as a world citizen is that of the prevention of accidents. The chemist and engineer are qualified by their training to be of special service in anticipating risks and thus preventing accidents. Many accidents still occur which could not be possible if those in charge of affairs fully realized their responsibility. Men are even exposed to unnecessary risks which they are expected to avoid by compliance with impossible orders for their own safety, and Mr. Calder expressed the hope that the interchange of details of accidents already taking place between several countries might become world-wide.

Coral Reef Ecology at Low Isles

THIS fine contribution* to the series of reports on the Great Barrier Reef Expedition of 1928-29 is chiefly concerned with accounts of three traverses across the reefs at Low Isles. Its production is the result of a collaboration between several workers; Prof. T. A. Stephenson originally chose the traverses; physical and chemical data were provided by Mr. A. P. Orr, and level sections by Mr. M. A. Spender. The bulk of the work, however, fell to Dr. Fraser and Dr. S. M. Manton, who jointly enumerated the organisms present, while the latter is responsible for drawing up this report.

Along each traverse a strip of reef one yard in width was examined. The first traverse, more than 1,000 feet long, started from a Thalassia flat inside the reef and crossing a shallow moat, passed over a boulder tract to descend the seaward slope of the reef to the muddy sea-floor at about twenty feet below datum. The second traverse, about half the length of the first, crossed a portion of the reef where the contour of the sea-floor was rather irregular. The third traverse on the windward side of the reef could not be worked in detail on account of the roughness of the water; but such observations as were made are nevertheless of much interest.

The results of these surveys are given in a number of graphs that permit easy comparisons to be made of the distribution of corals and algae, both as regards abundance of individuals and of species. Algae were abundant only in the moat and on the inshore part of the second traverse; they were almost absent from the seaward slopes of all three. Coral growth was vigorous in the deeper part of the moat—where there is always nearly a foot of water at low tide—as well as on the seaward slopes of the traverses below the datum line. In the moat physical conditions were extreme, especially as regards temperature and to a considerable extent silting; the association of species living there was hence not the same as that outside. *Montipora ramosa* was the dominant coral in the moat, indeed being restricted to that situation, whereas the *Acroporas*, species sensitive to heat and silt, were almost entirely confined to the seaward slopes.

One of the more important points brought out is the influence of silt on the distribution of corals. It seems clear that whereas some species are well able to withstand a fair amount of silting, others are killed off by very little. Silt is evidently a limiting factor, and it is in turn correlated, of course, with water movement.

In addition to the traverses at Low Isles, small isolated areas on the Outer Barrier Reef were examined and are described here for comparison.

* British Museum (Natural History). Great Barrier Reef Expedition, 1928-29. Scientific Reports, vol. 3, No. 10: Ecological Surveys of Coral Reefs. By Dr. S. M. Manton. Pp. 273-312 + 16 plates. (London: British Museum (Natural History), 1935.) 10s.