

News and Views

Cleveland Abbe (1838-1916)

ON December 3 the centenary occurs of the birth of the eminent American meteorologist and astronomer Cleveland Abbe, whose work at Cincinnati Observatory led to Congress passing the Act of 1870 authorizing the creation of a United States Government Weather Service and placing it under the Signal Branch of the War Department. Abbe took a prominent part in the organization of the new bureau and for forty-five years, from 1871 until 1916, was professor of meteorology and senior scientific assistant to the Chief Signal Officer. Abbe was born in New York on December 3, 1838, and graduated from the College of the City of New York in 1857. As a student he had studied Ferrel's work and this led him to a close examination of the meteorological papers then published. On the outbreak of the Civil War he enlisted, but served only for a short time on account of his nearsightedness. He then turned to astronomy, and worked at the observatories at Cambridge, Mass., Pulkovo and Washington. In 1868 he was appointed to the directorship of the Cincinnati Observatory in Ohio, holding this position until 1873. The list of his writings on both astronomy and meteorology is a very long one and includes "Studies in Storm and Weather Forecasting", "Mechanics of the Earth's Atmosphere" and "Physical Basis of Long Range Forecasting". His influence on the progress of meteorology in America was outstanding, and his work received recognition both at home and abroad. He was made a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1876, and in 1912 the Royal Meteorological Society awarded him the Symons Medal. He died at Chevy Chase, Md., on October 28, 1916.

New International Standard for Vitamin B₁

It is announced that the first International Standard for Vitamin B₁, which consisted of an adsorbate of the antineuritic vitamin, made from rice polishings, on fuller's earth, has now been replaced by a preparation of crystalline vitamin B₁ hydrochloride. In recent years, progress in the study of the antineuritic vitamin has been rapid, and this change in the form of the international standard has been made possible by the synthetic preparation of the vitamin in pure crystalline form. Through the generosity of four manufacturers, an adequate quantity of the new crystalline material was placed at the disposal of the National Institute for Medical Research, Hampstead, to enable a new standard to be prepared consisting of the pure crystalline substance. Extensive international investigations of the properties of this material, and, in particular, the determination of its potency in terms of the original international standard by a variety of methods, have now been completed, and the members of the Inter-

national Conference on Vitamin Standardization have unanimously recommended that the sample be adopted as the Second International Standard for Vitamin B₁, and that the international unit be defined as the antineuritic activity of 3 micrograms of the international standard preparation. This recommendation has been adopted by the Permanent Commission on Biological Standardisation of the Health Organisation of the League of Nations.

As in the case of the other international vitamin standards, the new standard for vitamin B₁ is held, on behalf of the Health Organisation of the League of Nations, at the National Institute for Medical Research, London, N.W.3, and is distributed therefrom to national control centres established in other countries for local distribution to laboratories, institutes and research workers; and to workers resident in countries in which the establishment of national control centres has not yet been completed. With regard to the supply of the new standard for vitamin B₁ to those requiring it in the United Kingdom, samples have already been sent to the laboratories, institutes and research workers who have hitherto received the standard adsorption product. Others requiring the standard are asked to make application to the Department of Biological Standards, National Institute for Medical Research, London, N.W.3.

National Association of Science Writers

THE National Association of Science Writers, of Washington, D.C., has been awarded the second annual Clement Cleveland Medal of the American Society for the Control of Cancer "for outstanding work during the year in the campaign to control cancer". The medal was established last year by Mrs. Robert G. Mead in memory of her father, Clement Cleveland. The late Dr. Cleveland was one of the pioneers in the medical profession on public education for cancer control, and it was in his New York home that the American Society for the Control of Cancer was organized in 1913. The award of this medal to the National Association of Science Writers is a fitting recognition of the work of this group of American journalists in promoting accuracy as well as intelligibility in dealing with scientific topics in the Press. The Association is a comparatively young body, and the fact that the award was made for work in connexion with a notoriously difficult subject, which is often the subject of exaggerated claims, enhances its value. It is interesting to note that Mr. J. G. Crowther, well known for his contributions on scientific topics to the Press in Great Britain, has been elected an associate member of the Association.