

SEVENTY YEARS AGO

NATURE, vol. 2, June 23, 1870

The Unit of Length

"The battle of the Standards is over, and we may say the Metre has gained the victory. The need of a new system of weights and measures to amend the strange diversities which disfigure our practice being admitted, the question has once more been started—Should we once for all found our system on a natural basis?" The seconds pendulum had been suggested but dismissed on account of the difficulty of ascertaining the real length of a normal pendulum. The advocates of the metre admit that greater accuracy is obtainable than that achieved by the French philosophers at the end of the eighteenth century, but point out that it is already a cosmopolitan unit, widely recognized, and in general use among many nations. Any slight error in its determination is more than counterbalanced by the extreme simplicity, symmetry and convenience of the metric system.

A Royal Commission which has considered the introduction of the metric system in Great Britain has recommended its legalization. "Since the complete substitution of the metric for the present practice is now practically certain, would it not be much better to prepare for the change and carry it into effect as speedily as possible?"

Advertising

"We have just seen a bill-head or order to which we think it necessary to call attention. On a scroll at the top is a name which, together with the address, which is on another scroll, we suppress. . . . In the centre is a coat of arms and crest surrounded by a garter, on which is printed *Fellow of the Chemical Society, London*. We have no wish to infer that this gentleman is not a most eminent chemist, but we do most emphatically protest against the membership of a learned society being turned to account for advertising purposes."

Museums of Natural History

"THERE is no doubt of the popularity of museums of natural history with the lower classes. That it is otherwise with more educated people is perhaps attributable to the fact that hardly any scientific knowledge is to be gained by a cursory inspection of crowded collections arranged with reference to economy of space rather than to the existing conditions of zoological science. It must not be forgotten that the sentiment of mere wonder . . . was satisfied, or at least blunted, in early childhood, in the case of those of us who have had access to well-illustrated books, and to the zoological gardens of great cities."

THE indifference of agriculturists to scientific research has been illustrated by the refusal of the Council of the Royal Agricultural Society to publish an account of the investigations which have established the truth of the old bucolic dogma, that berberries produce rust on wheat growing in their vicinity. There is now no doubt that the berberry-rust and the wheat-rust are two different stages in the genetic cycle of *Puccinia graminis*.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Monday, June 24

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, at 3 p.m.—Annual General Meeting.

Tuesday, June 25

ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, at 5 p.m.—Annual General Meeting.

Prof. A. R. Radcliffe Brown: "On Social Structure" (Presidential Address).

AUSTRIAN ACADEMY IN GREAT BRITAIN, at 5 p.m.—Prof. Dr. Max Neuburger: "The Contribution of the Vienna Medical School to Medical Science".

Friday, June 28

ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION BUREAUX (in the Lecture Hall of the Science Museum, South Kensington), at 5 p.m.—Miss E. W. Parker: "The ASLIB Register of Technical House Journals".

APPOINTMENTS VACANT

APPLICATIONS are invited for the following appointments on or before the dates mentioned:

HEAD OF THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT of the Burnley Municipal College—The Director of Education, Education Offices, Burnley (June 26).

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION for the Borough of Hyde—The Director of Education, Education Office, Union Street, Hyde (June 27).

LECTURER IN CHEMISTRY at the Rutherford Technical College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne—The Director of Education, City Education Office, Northumberland Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2 (June 29).

EDUCATION OFFICER to the Community Service Council for Durham County, Ltd.—The Director, Hallgarth House, Durham (June 29).

ASSISTANT LECTURER IN PHYSICS—The Registrar, The University, Manchester 13 (June 30).

CHEMIST AND BACTERIOLOGIST to the Borough of Chelmsford Water Undertaking—The Town Clerk, Municipal Offices, Rainsford House, Chelmsford (endorsed "Chemist and Bacteriologist") (July 1).

LECTURERS IN AGRICULTURE (two required)—Sudan Government London Office, Wellington House, Buckingham Gate, London, S.W.1 (quoting "Lecturer in Agriculture") (July 8).

COMMISSIONED ORDNANCE MECHANICAL ENGINEERS in the Indian Army Ordnance Corps—The Secretary, Military Department, India Office, London, S.W.1 (quoting "Ordnance Recruitment") (July 8).

TWO TEACHERS (men) OF ENGINEERING SUBJECTS—The Principal, South Dorset Technical College, Newstead Road, Weymouth (July 27).

ASSISTANT LECTURER FOR MINING—The Principal, County Secondary School and Cumberland Technical College, Workington.

REPORTS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

(not included in the monthly Books Supplement)

Great Britain and Ireland

Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. Report of the Administrative Council of the Corporation submitted to the Nineteenth Annual General Meeting on May 28th, 1940. Pp. ii+46. (London: Empire Cotton Growing Corporation.) [305]

Imperial Agricultural Bureaux. Joint Publication No. 3: The Breeding of Herbage Plants in Scandinavia and Finland. Pp. 124. (Aberystwyth: Imperial Bureau of Pastures and Forage Crops; Cambridge: Imperial Bureau of Plant Breeding and Genetics.) 4s. [305]

Other Countries

Canada: Department of Mines and Resources: Mines and Geology Branch. Bureau of Mines. Comparative Tests of various Fuels when burned in a Domestic Hot-Water Boiler, 1925 to 1938. By C. E. Baltzer and E. S. Malloch. (No. 802.) Pp. v+23. (Ottawa: King's Printer.) 25 cents. [305]

Newfoundland Government: Department of Natural Resources. Research Bulletin No. 7: Investigations into the Life History of the Lobster (*Homarus americanus*) on the West Coast of Newfoundland, 1938. By Dr. W. Templeman. Pp. 52. (St. John's: Department of Natural Resources.) 20 cents. [305]