

Professor Samueloff's release at the week-end was not intended by the Syrian Government as an acknowledgment of the value of his scientific work or even of his innocence of military activity. With a companion from the same aircraft, he was traded for thirteen Syrians in Israeli hands.

It is important that the principles which have been raised by this shabby incident should not be forgotten now that Professor Samueloff is back in Israel. The most important issue is to know how the scientific community should respond to Dr Edholm's plea that learned societies should pay some attention to what happens when scientists are involved in acts of piracy like this. On the face of things, of course, there is a case for doing nothing. Hi-jacking, like other forms of piracy, is a serious assault on civilized conventions but also a matter for governments to deal with. This is the letter of the law, from which it seems to follow that there is no case for asking that scientists should be dealt with differently from other people or that scientific societies should intervene when other professional bodies are silent. This, however, may be needlessly passive. Some arguments tell the other way.

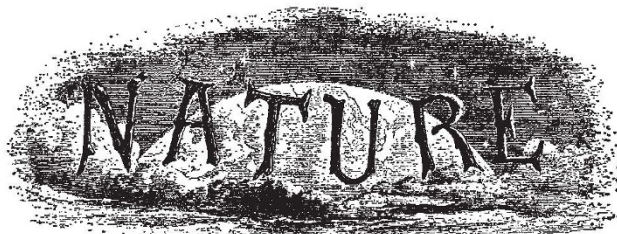
To begin with, simply because scientists frequently find themselves behaving as if science knows no boundaries, they tend to find themselves in dangerous places more frequently than, say, businessmen. Second, the international scientific community is often so tightly knit that it can exercise an influence which may be different from and even more powerful than that of other organizations, governments sometimes included. Especially when scientists are individually at risk, and where it seems that the scientific community could exert pressure in the right direction, there is a case for throwing seemingly disengagement from politics to the winds. To be sure, it is hard to see how the separate councils of individual learned societies could quickly make up their minds on a course of action when it seemed as if one of their members was threatened by an illegal civil act—in the case of Professor Samueloff, for example, some may have held that it would be more productive to press the Government of Israel to agree to an exchange of prisoners than to press simply for the unilateral release of the hi-jacking victims. Evidently there is plenty of room for argument there. Yet it is plain that incidents like these, and occasions when the liberty of scientists is impeded by the arbitrary acts of governments as in Brazil, will be more and not less frequent in the years ahead. Is it not time that the International Council of Scientific Unions put its hand to the formulation of an ostentatious set of principles by means of which governments should order their dealings with scientists of all nationalities? In the nature of things, it would only be possible to ask for the most elementary safeguards, and there could of course be no assurance that in a fight with a headstrong government, ICSU would emerge the winner. The boot would probably be on the other foot, indeed, but there is at least a chance that the threat of scorn among the scientific community would deter some governments from casual infringements of decency.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

**Talks on Universities (Part 2)**

from our Education Correspondent

THE second instalment in the talks at the Department of Education and Science on university expansion in the 1970s took place last week. This time it was the turn of the Association of University Teachers to meet the chairman of the University Grants Committee, Mr Kenneth Berrill, and the Minister of State for

**100 Years Ago***GOLD DIGGERS IN THIBET*

THE Thibetan gold-field of Thok-Jalung in lat.  $32^{\circ} 24' 26''$  and long.  $81^{\circ} 37' 38''$  was visited by the pundits employed by the G. T. Survey, in 1867 (August). The camp was pitched in a large desolate plain of a reddish brown appearance, the tents stand in pits seven or eight feet deep for protection against the cold wind, the elevation being 16,330 feet, yet the diggers prefer to work in the winter, when nearly 600 tents are to be found there; the soil when frozen does not "cave in." They have no wood, but use dried dung for fuel, and the water is so brackish as to be undrinkable until frozen and remelted. They live well, taking three meals a-day of boiled meat, barley cakes, and tea stewed with butter. They will not use the Himalayan tea, as too heating and only fit for poor folks.

The curious posture for sleeping, universal among the Thibetans, was observed here. They invariably draw their knees close up to their heads, and rest on their knees and elbows, huddling every scrap of clothing they can muster on their backs; the richer rest thus on a mattress rising towards the head. The poorer avail themselves of a suitable slope on the hill side, or pile stones and earth to a convenient height. This position is most probably adopted in order to secure as much warmth as possible for the abdomen, the thighs pressing against it and excluding the air.

The gold-diggers recreate themselves with tobacco smoked in iron pipes, and, notwithstanding the hardships of their laborious toil, seem very merry, singing songs in chorus, in which the women and children join.

*The Brighton Aquarium*

WOULD it be unduly troubling you were I to ask you to inform me, through the medium of the columns of NATURE, if the much-talked-of Brighton Aquarium is really to be "started"?

H. H. MOTT

*The Cloaca Maxima*

WILL you pardon me for asking a question which probably I ought to be able to answer myself? Mr. Corfield, in his interesting comparison of the hygienic performances of the ancients and ourselves, mentions the well-known Cloaca Maxima as one of the great glories of the Romans. Can he tell us how they got the sewage into it? I presume the invention of Bramah was not known in those times, and I was a little disappointed in not finding in his able paper a solution of a mystery which has puzzled me since my childhood. What did the Romans want with a Cloaca Maxima, and how did they use it?

Dec. 11th.

IGNORAMUS

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