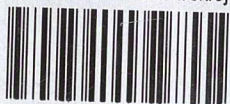


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*"To the solid ground  
Of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye."*—WORDSWORTH.



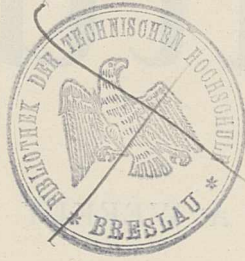
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# INDEX

## NAME INDEX

- Abbott (W.), *Machine Drawing and Design: a Textbook of Intermediate Standard for Engineering Students*, 962
- Abe (Yoshio), *The Wolf of Corea*, 71
- Abelous (J. E.), and R. Argaud, *Formation of Adrenaline in the Suprarenal Gland*, 682
- Abetti (G.), *Height of the Chromosphere in 1930*, 1014
- Abraham (J. J.), *The late Mr. Herbert Tomlinson, F.R.S.*, 153
- Achard (C.), and A. Boutaric, *Some Physical Properties of the Blood Serum in Lipoid Nephrosis*, 315; and M. Doladilhe, *The Physical Properties of the Blood Serum and of the Proteins separated from this Serum, etc.*, 555; and R. Arcand, *The Physical Properties of the Serum Proteins and of the Hydropic Serosities in Lipoid Nephrosis*, 646
- Ackerman (J. W.), [W. D. Bancroft, Catharine Gallagher, and], *Optical Sensitisation*, 846
- Adams (W. S.), *elected President of the American Astronomical Society*, 634
- Adamson (J.), [death], 404
- Ageew (N. W.), [N. S. Kurnakow and], *Physico-chemical Study of the Gold-Copper Solid Solutions*, 554
- Agramonte (Dr. A.), [death], 486
- Ainslie (Capt. M. A.), *Sir William Herschel's Mirrors*, 1007
- Airoldi (M.), *Fossil Corallinacæ from the Canaries (2)*, 735
- Alden (Dr. H. L.), *The Year's Progress in Astronomy*, 801; *Van Gent's Short Period Variable*, 641
- Alderman (A. R.), *The Meteorite Craters at Henbury, Central Australia*, 977
- Alexander (Dr. F. W.), *Braille Models for teaching Electricity and Magnetism to the Blind*, 698
- Alexander (H. G.), *Bird Song and Weather*, 549
- Alexander (Prof. S.), *Prof. H. Wildon Carr*, 99; *Purpose of a University*, 385
- Alexander (W. B.), *Control of Prickly-Pear by the Cochineal Insect*, 226
- Alexeenko (N. F.), *Diatoms growing on Stones on the Black Sea Littoral near Sebastopol*, 422
- Alkins (W. E.), *Experiments in Wire-drawing (2)*, 594; and W. Cartwright, *Experiments in Wire-drawing (1)*, 554
- Allee (Prof. W. C.), *Animal Aggregations: a Study in General Sociology*, 940
- Allen (E. Patricia), and P. Smith, *Selection of Skilled Apprentices for the Engineering Trades*, 463
- Allen (F. J.), and R. B. Moore, *Krypton and Xenon*, 380
- Allen and Hanburys, Ltd., *Insulin Therapy*, 461
- Allibone (Dr. T. E.), [Dr. B. F. J. Schonland, and], *Branching of Lightning*, 794
- Alston (A. H. G.), *Supplement 6 to Trimen's "A Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon"*, 891
- Alty (Prof. T.), *Reflection of Water Molecules at the Liquid Surface*, 72
- Amadori (M.), *Mercury Derivation of Divalent Bromophenols*, 647
- Amblor (H. R.), *The Direct Determination of Nitrogen in Gases*, 845
- Amiot (R.), [A. Boutaric and], *Experimental Researches on the Adhesion of Lubricating Layers to Metals*, 882
- Amirthalingam (C.), [Prof. J. H. Orton and], *Sex-change in the Oyster*, 273
- Amoudruz (G.), [A. Jayet and], *The Discovery of Magdalenian Deposits near Frangy (Haute Savoie)*, 1087
- Amstutz (A.), *The Petrographic Character of Banks Island in Melanesia*, 734
- Anderson (H. V.), and K. C. Chesley, *X-Ray Analysis of Slate*, 1043
- Anderson, [Newton and], *Respiration of Wheat at Low Temperature*, 970
- Andrade (Prof. E. N. da C.), *The Viscosity of Liquids*, 835
- Andrew (Prof. J. H.), *appointed Professor of Metallurgy in Sheffield University*, 975
- Andrews (H. E.), *Catalogue of Indian Insects. Pt. 18*, 867
- Andrews (J.) and others, *edited by Prof. R. Hegner and J. Andrews, Problems and Methods of Research in Protozoology*, 395
- Andrews and Bacon, *Production of High Vacua*, 121
- Andruetto (G.), *The Intrinsic Equations of Elastic Equilibrium*, 734
- Annequin (R.), [L. Bert and], *A New Method of Synthesis of Einnamic Aldehyde and its Homologues substituted in the Nucleus*, 125
- Antoniani (C.), *Behaviour in an Electric Field of Colloidal Humic-mineral Complexes*, 735
- Appleton (Prof. E. V.), *Polarisation of Downcoming Wireless Waves in the Southern Hemisphere*, 1037; and G. Builder, *Wireless Echoes of Short Delay*, 918
- Arber (Dr. Agnes), *Structural Features of the Cruciferous Flower*, 1043
- Arcand (A.), [C. Achard, A. Boutaric, and], *The Physical Properties of the Serum Proteins and of the Hydropic Serosities in Lipoid Nephrosis*, 646
- Archangel'skii (A.), and D. Perkin, *Origin of the Ferrous Deposits in the Lipetsk Area*, 163
- Arditti (G.), *The Oxidation of Paraffin Oil*, 882
- Argaud (R.), [J. E. Abelous and], *Formation of Adrenaline in the Suprarenal Gland*, 682
- van Arkel (A. E.), and J. H. de Boer, *Deutsche, von den Verfassern autorisierte Ausgabe von L. Klemm und W. Klemm, Chemische Bindung als elektrostatische Erscheinung*, 816
- Arkell (Dr. W. J.), [Dr. K. S. Sandford and], *Palæolithic Man and the Nile-Faiyum Divide: a Study of the Region during Pliocene and Pleistocene Times*, 287; [J. A. Douglas and], *The Stratigraphical Distribution of the Cornbrash (2)*, 125
- Arkwright (J. A.), and others, *A System of Bacteriology in Relation to Medicine. Vol. 6*, 888
- Armellini (G.), *The Horizontal Diameter of the Sun in 1929 and 1930*, 1014; *The Theory of the Variability of the Family of Mira Ceti*, 646
- Armstrong (Dr. E. F.), *Paper Making*, 949; *Problems of the Mineral Industry*, 508
- Armstrong (Prof. H. E.), *Cosmic Evolution and Earthly Needs*, 761; *The Dyestuff Industry*, 542
- Armstrong (J. I.), *awarded a Beit Fellowship for Scientific Research*, 161
- Arnot (Dr. F. L.), *appointed Lecturer in Natural Philosophy in the United College, St. Andrews*, 81; *Diffraction of Electrons*, 799
- Arnulf (A.), *La mesure des rayons de courbure des surfaces sphériques employées en optique*, 323



- Arrivaut (G.), Action of Arsenic Chloride upon Nickel, 82  
 Ashbridge (N.), Acoustical Problems of Broadcasting Studios, 844  
 Ashcroft (E. W.), Faraday, 323  
 Ashworth (Dr. J. R.), The Specific Heat of Ferromagnetics and Ewing's Model of the Magnetic Atom, 1003  
 Askania-Werke A.-G., Photographic Vibrograph, 460  
 Askew (F. A.), Miss H. M. Bruce, Dr. R. K. Callow, J. St. L. Philpot, and T. A. Webster, Crystalline Vitamin D, 758  
 Aston (Dr. F. W.), Atomic Weights deduced from Mass-spectra, 460; Constitution of Lithium, 149; Constitution of Thallium and Uranium, 725; New Isotopes of Strontium and Barium, 221; The Unit of Atomic Weight, 731  
 Atkins (Dr. W. R. G.), Accuracy obtainable with Gas-filled Photoelectric Cells, 550; Radiation and Life, 199; The Penetration of Light through Successive Layers of Tissue Paper, 545; The Treatment of 'Gapes' in Chickens, 585; and Florence A. Stanbury, Illumination and Tree Growth, 191  
 Atkinson (Ll. B.), The Mechanical Aspects of Electricity (Thomas Hawksley Lecture), 865  
 Atkinson (Dr. R. d'E.), Atomic Synthesis and Stellar Energy, 194  
 van Aubel (Prof. E.), Diamagnetism of Liquid Mixtures, 455; Rotatory Magnetic Polarisation, 1004  
 Auden (Dr. H. A.), and Dr. W. P. Joshua, Saccharification of Wood, 1045  
 Audubert (R.), The Rôle of Water in Photovoltaic Cells, 466; and J. Roulleau, The Rôle of the Phenomena of Photoconductance in the Photovoltaic Effect, 555  
 Auger (P.), and C. Lapique, Variation in the Spectrum of the Sensibility of Cuprous Oxide Cells, 646  
 Aughtie (Dr. F.), A Remote Electrically Recording Accelerometer with particular reference to Wheel-impact Measurements, 918; A Remote Electrically Recording Load-gauge for Wheel-impact Measurements, 918  
 Austin (H. O.), Insulation of Overhead Transmission Cables, 416  
 Aveling (Dr. F. A. P.), Ferment upon, of the title of Professor, 975  
 Ayling (Jean), The Behaviour of Young Children, 777  
 Ayyar (T. V. Ramakrishna), Control of Prickly-Pear by the Cochineal Insect, 837  
 Baade (Dr. W.), A New Cluster of Faint Nebulae, 641  
 Baba (Kikutaro), A supposed Primitive Gill-less Nudi-branch, 728  
 Babička (J.), Polarographic Analysis with the dropping Mercury Cathode of Extracts from Plant Tissues, 1013  
 Bacon, [Andrews and], Production of High Vacua, 121  
 Badami (J. S.), [Prof. A. Fowler and], Spectrum of the Hydrogen-nitrous Oxide Flame, 881; [Dr. K. R. Rao and], Resonance Spectrum of Hydrogen, 585; and Dr. K. R. Rao, The Structure of the Spectrum Se III, 496  
 Badger (Prof. W. L.), and Prof. W. L. McCabe, Elements of Chemical Engineering, 622  
 Badley (J. H.), The Will to Live: an Outline of Evolutionary Psychology, 954  
 Badoche (M.), [C. Dufraisse and], Researches on the Dissociable Organic Oxides, 422, 503  
 Bailey (C. R.), and A. B. D. Cassie, Infra-Red Absorption Spectrum of Carbonyl Sulphide, 637  
 Bailey (Prof. E. B.), Representation of Crystal Structure, 869  
 Bailey (Mrs. F. M.), awarded the Brewster Medal of the American Ornithologists' Union, 998  
 Bailey (Dr. G. H.), and H. W. Bausor, Chemistry for Matriculation. Third edition, 173  
 Bailey (Dr. K. C.), The 'Lapides palmati' mentioned in the "Historia Naturalis" of the Elder Pliny, 672  
 Bailey (Prof. S. I.), [death], 13  
 Bailly (O.), and R. Netter, The Isolation of Carotene from the Suprarenal Glands, 1086  
 Bainbridge (K. T.), Isotopes of Lithium, Sodium, and Potassium, 876  
 Baird and Tatlock (London), Ltd., Analytical Reagents, Standards, and Tests, 65  
 Baker (J. R.), Spermicidal Power of Chemical Contraceptives, 119  
 Baker (Prof. R. H.), Astronomy: an Introduction, 563  
 Baker (R. T.), On a Fossil Timber from the Sydney Harbour Colliery, 806  
 Baker (W.), A Two-Dimensional Space Lattice? 1078  
 Bakker (Dr. C. J. W.), [E. Segré and], Zeeman Effect of a Forbidden Line, 1076  
 Balavoine (P.), A Formula for the Determination of the Alcoholic Strength of Brandy, 279; The Analytical Characters of Caramel regarded as a Colouring Matter for Food, 83  
 Bald (J. G.), [G. Samuel and], *Thrips tabaci* as a Vector of Plant Virus Disease, 494  
 Baldet (F.), The Raffety Bands and the Spectra of Comets, 234  
 Baldwin (Prof. J. Mark), Gift to the Edward Bagnall Poulton Fund of Oxford University, 975  
 Balfour-Browne (J. W. A. F.), elected a Frank Smart Student in Zoology at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, 768  
 Ballantyne (W. H.), The Cost of Patent Litigation, 790  
 Balls (Dr. W. L.), and others, Operation of the Seed Control Law upon the Pedigree of Cotton Seed; Developments of the Existing System for Seed Supply of Cotton in Egypt, 766  
 Balme (G.), [R. de la Boulaye and], Velocity of Propagation of Musical Sounds, 646  
 Bancroft (W. D.), and J. E. Rutzler, jr., Reversible Coagulation in Living Tissue, (2) 280, 1014; and G. H. Richter, (3) 423, (4) 846; J. W. Ackerman, and Catharine Gallagher, Optical Sensitisation, 846; and S. F. Whearty, jr., Activation by Charcoal, 280  
 Banting (Dr. F. G.), awarded the Flavelle Medal of the Royal Society of Canada, 275  
 Barbieri (G. A.), Molybdo-octocyanides, 647; Rhodium Compounds, 683  
 Barcroft (Prof. J.), [Dr. R. Lemberg, Dr. D. Keilin, and], Uteroverdin, 967  
 Bardet (J.), [C. Levaditi, A. Tchakirian, A. Vaisman, and], The Distribution of Gallium in the Organism, 466  
 Barksdale (J. D.), [Dr. J. A. Cushman and], Tertiary Foraminifera, 1080  
 Barnard (Dr. F.), [death], 666  
 Barnard (J. E.), and W. J. Elford, The Causative Organism in Infectious Ectromelia, 917  
 Barnell (H. R.), appointed Frank Smart University Student in Botany in Cambridge University, 844  
 Barnes (Dr. A. S.), appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Birmingham University, 80  
 Barnes (Bishop E. W.), The Evolution of the Universe, 719  
 Barnett (Dr. B.), appointed Curator of Reptiles of the Zoological Society's Gardens, 1036  
 Barnett (Dr. M. A. F.), Radio Observations during a Solar Eclipse, 381  
 Barnett (Prof.), A New Electron-Inertia Effect, 549  
 Barnitt (J. B.), and R. H. Heilman, Heat Insulation of Furnaces, 971  
 Baron (C.), C. Boulanger, and R. Le Grain, Petrol-alcohol-benzene Mixtures, 163  
 Barr (Prof. A.), [death], 266; [obituary article], 294  
 Barr (Dr. G.), A Monograph of Viscometry, 947  
 Barrett (B. H.), [Prof. J. W. Gregory and], General Stratigraphy, 945  
 Barrett (C.), The Habits of *Megascolides australis*, 669  
 Barrett (Sir James W.), Nationalism and Science in China, 1035; Preservation of the Australian Flora and Fauna, 1041  
 Barritt (N. W.), Cotton Growing in Egypt, 1001  
 Barry (T. H.), Oil from Malayan *Aleurites Montana* and the Properties of Hong Kong Oil, 1086  
 Bartlett, jr. (J. H.), Isotopic Displacement in Hyperfine Structure, 408  
 Bartoszewiczowna (Mlle. E.), [W. Swietolawski and], Application of the Adiabatic Microcalorimeter to the Determination of the Heat of Adsorption and of Vaporisation, 126  
 Barve (P. M.), [Dr. B. N. Desai and], Coagulation of Colloids by Electrolytes, 907  
 Bastow (S. H.), and F. P. Bowden, On the Contact of Smooth Surfaces, 881



- Basu (P. C.), [Dr. B. S. Guha and], Human Skulls and Bones from the Naga Hills, 762
- Bate (A. E.), The Bottle-Pipe Resonator, 270
- Bates (J. R.), [G. E. Kimball and], The Band Spectrum of AsH, 969
- Bateson (G.), elected a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, 768
- Bather (Dr. F. A.), Echinoderm Larvæ, 417
- Baur (Dr.), Plant Breeding in Germany, 975
- Bausor (H. W.), [Dr. G. H. Bailey and], Chemistry for Matriculation. Third edition, 173
- Beadle (G. W.), Supernumerary Cell Divisions in Maize, 191
- Beadle (L. C.), awarded a Grant from the Balfour Fund of Cambridge University, 880
- Bearden (Dr. J. A.), Absolute X-Ray Wave-lengths, 156
- Beattie (Prof. J. M.), Foot-and-Mouth Disease Research, 765; Studies in Immunity, 888
- Beauvais (G.), [C. Gutton and], Oscillators with very Short Waves, 1013
- Becke (Prof. F.), [death], 13
- Beckett (H. E.), [A. F. Dufton and], Measurement of Ultra-Violet Radiation, 223; Unusual Lightning, 189
- Beccarel (J.), and L. Matout, The Decomposition of the Absorption Bands of Xenotime by a Transverse Magnetic Field, 466
- Bedford (Lieut.-Col. Sir Charles), [death], 143; [obituary article], 178
- Beebe (Dr. W.), The Bermuda Oceanographic Expedition, 406
- Beghin (H.), and Prof. G. Julia, Exercices de mécanique. Tome 1, fasc. 2, 514
- Bělař (Dr. K.), [obituary article], 59
- Beliankin (D.), Anemusite (with reference to Pacifites of Barth), 422
- Belin (E.), The Secrecy of Telegraphic and Radiotelegraphic Transmissions, 421
- Bell, Bart. (Sir Hugh), [death], 13; [obituary articles], 96, 98
- Bendien (Dr.), Method of Diagnosis of Cancer, 438
- Bendrihem (A.), [J. Roche and], The Combination of Globin with Hæmatins of various Origins, 646
- Benedicks (Dr. C.), and H. Löfquist, Non-Metallic Inclusions in Iron and Steel, 856
- Benedict (Ruth), Folk-Tales of the Cochita, New Mexico, 970
- Benham (Dr. F. C.), appointed University Reader in Commerce in London University, 804; Fluctuations in Employment in Great Britain, 753
- Bennett (S. A.), awarded the Medal of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club, 757
- Bennett (Victoria E. M.), and Dr. Susan Isaacs, Health and Education in the Nursery, 690
- Bennett (Dr. W. C.), Hawaiian Temples, 497
- Benson (Sir J. Hawtrey), [death], 696
- Bentley (B. H.), appointed Professor of Botany in Sheffield University, 1048
- Berg (L.), The Black Sea Sprat, 770
- Bergey (D. H.), and others, Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology: a Key for the Identification of Organisms of the Class Schizomycetes. Third edition, 6
- Bergius (Dr. F.), joint sharer of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for 1931, 864
- Bergmann (Dr. E.), and W. Schütz, Structure of the Azides, 1077
- Bergmann (Dr. L.), A Photoelectric Relay, 677
- Berkeley (L. M.), Addition-Subtraction Logarithms to Five Decimal Places, 91
- Bernheim (Mlle. Germaine), Preparation of the Cyanamides of the Earths and Alkaline Earths, 315
- Berry (Dr. R. J. A.), and Dr. R. G. Gordon, The Mental Defective: a Problem in Social Inefficiency, 954
- Bert (L.), and R. Annequin, A New Method of Synthesis of Einnamic Aldehyde and its Homologues substituted in the Nucleus, 125
- Bertrand (G.), and P. de Berredo Carneiro, The Active Principle of Guarana, 555; and P. Serbescu, The Toxic Power of Aluminium compared with that of Iron, Nickel, and other Metals, 466
- Bertyn (F.), The Poisonous Effect of the Fogs of the Meuse Valley due to Industrial Emanations, 422
- Best (Elsdon), [obituary article], 929
- Besterman (T.), Some Modern Mediums, 92
- Betti (M.), and P. Pratesi, Optical Resolution of Racemic Aldehydes (2), 1014
- Bevans (C. A.), [C. E. Parmenter, S. N. Trevino, and], Articulation of Isolated Sounds, 380
- Bews (Prof. J. W.), The Ecological Viewpoint, 245
- Beyer (Prof. S. W.), [death], 59
- Bhagavantam (S.), Effect of Pressure on Raman Spectra, 188; Intensity of Raman Scattering in Gases, 272; Polarisation of Raman Scattering by Hydrogen Gas, 70; [Sir C. V. Raman and], Evidence for the Spin of the Photon from Light-Scattering, 114; Experimental Demonstration of Spin of Light, 576; Spin of Light Quanta, 727
- Bhargava (Y.), [Prof. M. N. Saha and], The Spin of the Photon, 870
- Bickford (William), Centenary of the Discovery of the Bickford Miner's Safety Fuse, 576
- Biden (C. L.), Sea-Angling Fishes of the Cape (South Africa), 209
- van Biesbroeck (Prof. G.), Comet Notes, 416
- Biffen (Sir R. H.), Rust Diseases of Cereal Crops, 728
- Bigot (A.), and J. Dubois, The Presence of the Ordovician in the Moroccan Anti-Atlas, 555
- Bilham (E. G.), Meteorology and Agricultural Research, 667
- Billy (M.), and F. Trombe, The Preparation of Pure Cerium, 734
- Binet (L.), and J. Magrou, Sulphur and Growth, 466; and N. V. Strumza, The Hæmatopoietic Power of Carotene, 387
- Bingham (R. T. W.), and others, Reflection of X-Rays, 641
- Birckner [Seidell and], Anti-Neuritic Vitamin, 229
- Birula (A. A.), The Metacarpalia and Metatarsalia of *Ursus spelæus* Rosenm., 163; The Rodents from the Quaternary Deposits in the Crimea, 127
- Bishop (L. R.), Nitrogen Contents of Barley and its Wort, 308
- Bjerknes (Prof. V. F. K.), awarded the Symons Gold Medal of the Royal Meteorological Society, 931; Dynamical Aspects of Electromagnetism, 369
- Blacktin (S. C.), Properties of Aerosols, 968; and H. Robinson, Electrification of Coal Dust, 498
- Blair (E. W.), [death], 13
- Blanc (G. A.), Certain Properties of the Silica remaining after attacking Leucite with Acids, 647
- Blanc (G.), and J. Caminopétros, Experimental Researches on the Sensibility of Domestic Animals . . . to the Virus of Exanthematic Fever, 503
- Blanchard (Prof. A. A.), and Prof. J. W. Phelan, Synthetic Inorganic Chemistry: a Course of Laboratory and Classroom Study for First Year College Students. Fourth edition, 92
- Blanesburgh (Lord), inaugural address at opening of new session of the Sir John Cass Technical Institute, 611
- Blazey (C.), Brittleness in Copper, 594
- Bleek (Miss D. F.), The Hadzapi or Watindegga of Tanganyika, 379
- Bless (A. A.), Composition of the Interior of the Earth, 280
- Bligh (E. W.), [S. G. B. Stubbs and], Sixty Centuries of Health and Physick: the Progress of Ideas from Primitive Magic to Modern Medicine, 939
- Bligh (N. M.), Nightingale's Magnetism and Electricity, 959; Shearcroft's Post-Primary Science. Book 1, 960; Toms's School Certificate Magnetism and Electricity, 431
- Blina (Dr. L. V.), Detection of Syphilis, 459
- Bloch (E.), [L. Bloch, F. Esclangon, and P. Lacroute], Observation of the Zeeman Effect with High Frequency, 386
- Bloch (L.), E. Bloch, F. Esclangon, and P. Lacroute, Observation of the Zeeman Effect with High Frequency, 386
- Bloch (O.), The Faith of a Technical Man, 901
- Boas (Prof. F.), Race and Progress, 557
- Bocciarelli (D.), A Hard Component of the  $\beta$ -Radiation of Potassium, 374
- de Boer (J. H.), [A. E. van Arkel und], Deutsche, von den Verfassern autorisierte Ausgabe von L. Klemm und W. Klemm, Chemische Bindung als elektrostatische Erscheinung, 816



- Bohn (G.), and Mme. Anna Drzewina, Influence of Metallic Silver on the Calcification of the Larvæ of the Sea-urchin, 806
- Bohn (P. R.), The Mechanism of the Synthesis of Fats at the Expense of Glucides, 770
- Bohr (Prof. Niels), Maxwell and Modern Theoretical Physics, 691
- Du Bois (A. H.), Variations of the Blood Serum Albumins under the influence of Reticulo-Endothelial Blocking, 279
- Du Bois [McBain and], Electrokinetics and the Interpretation of Surface Conductivity, 677
- Bolam (Dr. T. R.), Condition of Sparingly Soluble Substances in Gelatine, 222
- Bolla (Dr. G.), Structure of the Raman Band of Water, 546
- Bonacina (L. C. W.), [J. E. Clark, I. D. Margary, R. Marshall, Capt. C. J. P. Cave, and], Phenological Observations in the British Isles from Nov. 1929 to Nov. 1930, 917
- Bonar (Dr. J.), Theories of Population from Raleigh to Arthur Young, 940
- von Bonde (Dr. C.), The Correlation between Marine Biology and the Problems of the Fishing Industry, 801
- Bone (Prof. W. A.), Photographic Analysis of Explosion Flames, 589; The Slow Combustion of Methane and Ethane, 188; R. P. Frazer, and W. H. Wheeler, Flame Propagation in an Electric Field, 274
- Bonino (G. B.), and L. Brüll, Raman Spectrum and Chemical Constitution of Certain Chloroethylenes, 595; Raman Spectrum of Dichlorobromomethane, 1051; and P. Cella, Raman Spectra of Hydrogenated Derivatives of Naphthalene, 1051
- Bonnet (Prof.), A Sea-lion Census, 640
- Bonvicini (D.), Certain Fundamental Theorems of Electrodynamics and of the Statics of Elastic Solids (2), 806
- Booker, [Rollefson and], Photochemical Decomposition of Hydrogen Iodide, 72
- Boothman (Flight-Lieut. J. N.), Aeroplane Speed Record, 490
- Borloz (A.), Liquefaction Phenomena in a Coinage Bronze, 734
- Borsook (H.), and H. M. Winegarden, Work of the Kidney in the Production of Urine; The Energy Cost of the Excretion of Urine, 83
- Bosch (Dr. C.), joint sharer of the Nobel prize for chemistry for 1931, 863
- Bose (Prof. D. M.), and S. Datta, Absorption Spectra of the  $Ce^{+++}$  Ion in Solution, 270; Raman Lines due to Co-ordination Bond, 725
- Bosscha (Johannes), Centenary of the birth of, 822
- Bougault (J.), and G. Schuster, Composition of Karité Butter, 682; and J. Guillou, Some Reactions of certain Barbituric Derivatives, 770
- Boulanger (C.), [C. Baron, R. Le Grain, and], Petrol-alcohol-benzene Mixtures, 163
- de la Boulaye (R.), and G. Balme, Velocity of Propagation of Musical Sounds, 646
- Boulenger (E. G.), Dr. Joan B. Procter, 664
- Boulton (E. H. B.), reappointed university lecturer in forestry in Cambridge University, 844
- Bourguet (M.), [R. Lespieau, R. L. Wakeman, and], The Raman Effect in Chemistry, 503
- Bourne (Prof. G. C.), appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Development Commissioners on Fishery Research, 184
- Boutaric (A.), [C. Achard and], Some Physical Properties of the Blood Serum in Lipoid Nephrosis, 315; [C. Achard, A. Arcand, and], The Physical Properties of the Serum Proteins and of the Hydropic Serosities in Lipoid Nephrosis, 646; [C. Achard, M. Doladilhe, and], The Physical Properties of the Blood Serum and of the Proteins separated from this Serum, etc., 555; and R. Amiot, Experimental Researches on the Adhesion of Lubricating Layers to Metals, 882
- Bowden (E.), [M. Hochstadter, W. Vogel, and], An Improved Method of constructing High-voltage Cables, 933
- Bowden (F. P.), [S. H. Bastow and], On the Contact of Smooth Surfaces, 881
- Bowen (Dr. I. S.), [Prof. R. A. Millikan and], Similarity between Cosmic Rays and Gamma Rays, 582
- Bowen (R. E.), Movement of the so-called Hairs in the Ampullar Organs of Fish Ears, 280; The Cupula of the Ear, 846
- Bower (Dr. E. C.), Orbit and Mass of Pluto, 1047
- Bowie (Dr. J. A.), Rationalization, 92
- Bowman (W. D.), The Story of Surnames, 743
- Boycott (Prof. A. E.), Nature of Viruses, 727
- Boylan (R. K.), The Mobilities of Atmospheric Large Ions, 1013
- Boys (Prof. C. V.), Carbon Contacts, 968; Electric Pendulum Clocks, 651
- Bozman (A. M.), A School Algebra: as far as the Advanced Course in the School Certificate Stage, 1061
- Bozza (Dr. G.), Mechanism of Drying, 380
- Bradbrooke (F. D.), The Light Aeroplane Manual, 961
- Bradford (Dr. S. C.), Classification for Bibliography of Science, 268; Condition of Sparingly Soluble Substances in Gelatine, 223
- Bradshaw (W. N.), [S. G. Clarke and], The Calcium Fluoride Method for the Determination of Fluoride, 1086
- Bragg (Prof. W. L.), awarded the Hughes Medal of the Royal Society, 821; presented with the Hughes Medal of the Royal Society, 974; The Architecture of the Solid State (Kelvin Lecture), 210, 248; The New Crystallography, 511
- Brasch (A.), and F. Lange, Utilisation of Atmospheric Electric Fields, 380
- Brauner (Prof. B.), The Faraday Festival, 352; and E. Švagr, A Physico-chemical Study of the Sulphates of the Rare Earths, 1013
- Brauns (D. A.), Optical Rotation and Atomic Dimension, 876
- Bray (T.), Television and Atmospherics, 439
- Bretscher (Dr. K.), Bird Migration in Switzerland, 676
- Bridel (M.), and Mlle. A. Kramer, The Constitution of Asebotoside (Asebotine): its Identity with Phlorizoside (Phlorizine), 978
- Bridges (Dr. C. B.), The Gene and the Theory of Living Structures, 991
- Briggs (Prof. H.), Classification of Carbonaceous Minerals, 72; Relation between the Yield of Crude Oil and the Composition of Retortable Carbonaceous Minerals, 42
- Bright (Sir Charles), Let's Help! a Collection of Good Causes, 989
- Brighton (A. G.), appointed Curator of the Sedgwick Museum of Geology, Cambridge University, 804
- Briner (E.), A. Demolis, and H. Paillard, The Ozonation of Aldehydes and the Theory of Active Molecules, 235; and B. Susz, The Maximum Concentration of Endothermic Compounds at High Temperatures, 83
- Briquet (A.), Le littoral du nord de la France et son évolution morphologique, suivi d'un appendice: L'évolution du rivage du nord de la France et l'activité de l'homme, 396
- Briscoe (Prof. H. V. A.), and others, The Atomic Weight of Thallium, 763
- Briscoe, Robinson, and Stoddart, Rhenium Compounds, 192, 729
- Bristol (Prof. C. L.), [death], 666
- British Drug Houses, Ltd., Insulin Therapy, 461; Products of the, 406; Specialities of, 866
- Britton (L.), Hunger and Love, 475
- Bromehead (C. N.), The London Skull, 118
- Bronsdon (H. W.), and E. H. S. van Someren, Application of the Spectrograph to the Analysis of Non-ferrous Metals and Alloys, 554, 802
- Bronson (B. S.), Nutrition and Food Chemistry, 856
- Brooks (F. T.), Forestry Research in Great Britain, 118
- Brooks (Matilda Moldenhauer), The Penetration of 1-naphthol-2-sulphonate Indophenol, etc., 83
- Broom (Dr. R.), The Origin of the Human Skeleton: an Introduction to Human Osteology, 4
- Brose (Dr. H. L.), appointed Professor of Physics at Nottingham University College, 81
- Brouwer (D.), [Prof. E. Brown and], Analysis of Clock Records, 38
- Brown (Dr. A. N. Rudmose), appointed Professor of Geography in Sheffield University, 1048
- Brown (Prof. E.), and D. Brouwer, Analysis of Clock Records, 38
- Brown (F. J.), The Cable and Wireless Communications of the World. Second edition, 1057



- Brown [Newton and], Respiration of Wheat at Low Temperature, 970
- Brown (O. F.), [R. A. Watson Watt and], Radio Research in the British Empire, 755
- Brown (Robert), Papers commemorative of, 899
- Brown (W. R.), [R. Newton and], Frost Injury to Plants, 911
- Browne (W. R.), Notes on Bathyliths and Some of their Implications, 806
- Bruce (Major-Gen. Sir David), [death], 930
- Bruce (Miss H. M.), [F. A. Askew, Dr. R. K. Callow, J. St. L. Philpot, T. A. Webster, and], Crystalline Vitamin D, 758
- Bruhat (G.), and J. Thouvenin, The Double Refraction produced by the Compression of Amorphous Silica and Crystallised Quartz and its dispersion in the Ultra-Violet, 1050
- de Bruin (T. L.), [Prof. P. Zeeman, J. H. Gisolf, and], Magnetic Resolution and Nuclear Moment of Rhenium, 637
- Brüll (L.), [G. B. Bonino and], Raman Spectrum and Chemical Constitution of Certain Chloroethylenes, 595; Raman Spectrum of Dichlorobromomethane, 1051
- Brun (A.), The Apparent Dispersion of the Optical Axes in Peridote and the Measurement of 2V, 1086; The Separation of the *ng* and *np* Ultra-Violet Spectra refracted by a Doubly Refracting Prism, 1086
- Brunel (A.), [R. Fosse, P. E. Thomas, and], Application of the Quantitative Spectrophotometric Analysis of Allantoin, 421; The Quantitative Analysis of Very Small Quantities of Allantoin at High Dilutions, 315
- Brunet (Prof. P.), Faraday and French Physicists, 346
- Bryce (Dr. G.), [death], 404
- Bryk (F.), Die Beschneidung bei Mann und Weib, 91
- Buch (Dr. K.), Dr. H. Wattenberg, and H. W. Harvey, Apparent Dissociation Constants of Carbon Dioxide in Sea-water of Different Salt Contents, 411
- Buchner (Dr. H.), Diamagnetism of Liquid Mixtures, 301
- Buchner (Dr. P.), Tier und Pflanze in Symbiose, 558
- Budge (Sir E. A. Wallis), Amulets and Superstitions, 204
- Builder (G.), [Prof. E. V. Appleton and], Wireless Echoes of Short Delay, 918
- Bull (H. B.), and R. A. Gortner, Studies on Electrokinetic Potentials (9), 423
- Bullard (E. C.), and H. S. W. Massey, Diffraction of Electrons, 799
- Buller (Prof. A. H. R.), Recent Advances in our Knowledge of the Higher Fungi, 81; Researches on Fungi. Vol. 4, 944
- Burchardt (H.), Regulation of the Secretory Activity of the Seminal Vesicle, 468
- Burchell (J. P. T.), Derived Early Mousterian (Levalloisian) Implements in the Melt-water Gravels of the Coombe Rock Glaciation, 909; Pottery with Flint Implements of Upper Palaeolithic Facies from Swanscombe, Kent, 548; Relation of Neanthropic Man to the Ice Age, 879
- Burdon (R. S.), Measurements of the Height of a Large Drop of Mercury, 456
- Buret (R.), [C. Dufrainse and], The Dissociable Organic Oxides: a Dimethoxyrubrene, 163
- Burfield (S. T.), [Prof. J. H. Orton and], Biological Effects of Cosmic and  $\gamma$ -Radiation, 376
- Burgess (A. F.), Control of the Gipsy and Brown-tail Moth-pests in the United States, 146
- Burgwitz (G.), [G. Nadson and], Yeasts from the North Polar Ocean, 682
- Burkitt (M. C.), Age of Certain Gravels in the New Forest Area, 222
- Burpee (Dr. L. J.), awarded the Tyrrel medal of the Royal Society of Canada, 275
- Burt (Prof. C.), appointed professor of psychology at University College, London, 161
- Burton (A. C.), [Prof. J. C. McLennan, A. Pitt, J. O. Wilhelm, and], Superconductivity at High Frequencies, 1004
- Burton (E. F.), [A. C. Hendrik and], A Treatment for Malignant Tumours, 544
- Burton (M.), The Age of Flint, 32
- Bury (H.), Age of Certain Gravels in the New Forest Area, 377
- Buston (H. W.), A Micro-method for the Determination of Uronic Anhydride Groups in Pectic Substances, 1086
- Butcher (Dr. R. W.), Faraday as a Botanist, 820
- Butenandt (A.), [Dr. G. F. Marrian and], Oestrus-producing Hormones, 305
- Butkevitch (V. V.), [D. Prianischnikov and], The Physiological Characteristics of Potassium Salts, 163
- Butler (D.), Curious Behaviour in a North American Corn-snake in Reference to Moles, 579
- Buxton (Dr. L. H. Dudley), and D. Talbot Rice, Human Remains from Kish, 798
- Buxton (Dr. P. A.), Control of Humidity of Air Currents, 837; Humidity Control and Entomological Problems, 1079
- Byck (H. T.), [F. O. Rice and], Collision between Organic Molecules and Surfaces, 228
- Cagnasso (A.), [L. Cambi and], Nitrosodithiocarbamates, 595
- Cahen (R.), [J. Saidman, J. Meyer, and], The Local Effects in the Rat due to Electric Fields of Very High Frequency, 387
- Calderwood (W. L.), Flying-fish, 216
- Caldwell (Miss F. E. S.), awarded the Harkness Scholarship in Cambridge University, 80
- Callan (T.), and N. Strafford, Examination of Dyed Leathers in Cases of Alleged Dermatitis, 733
- Callow (Dr. R. K.), [F. A. Askew, Miss H. M. Bruce, J. St. L. Philpot, T. A. Webster, and], Crystalline Vitamin D, 758
- Calvet (E.), Velocities and Heats of Saponification of the Amides, 235
- Cambi (L.), and A. Cagnasso, Cobalt Nitrosodithiocarbamates, 683; Nitrosodithiocarbamates, 595
- Cameron (Dr. A. E.), Agricultural Entomology, 943
- Camichel (Prof. C.), Leçons sur les conduites, 209
- Caminopétros (J.), [G. Blanc and], Experimental Researches on the Sensibility of Domestic Animals . . . to the Virus of Exanthematic Fever, 503
- Camis (Prof. M.), translated and annotated by Dr. R. S. Creed, The Physiology of the Vestibular Apparatus, 815
- Cammiade (L. A.), Were-Tigers in India, 728
- Campbell (Dr. Norman R.), Formal Logic, 620
- Cannan (Prof. E.), Population and Production, 534, 658
- Cannicci (G.), Bacterial Flora of Certain Fish, 735
- Cannon (Prof. W. B.), conferment upon, of an Honorary Doctorate by Paris University, 936
- Capey (R.), The Printing of Textiles, 855
- Cardinall (A. W.), Tales told in Togoland, to which is added the Mythical and Traditional History of Dagomba, by E. F. Tamakloe, 1026
- Carneiro (P. de Berredo), [G. Bertrand and], The Active Principle of Guarana, 555
- Carpenter (Sir Harold), Stainless Metals, 382
- Carr (Dr. H. Wildon), The Monadology of Leibniz: with an Introduction, Commentary, and Supplementary Essays, 136
- Carr (Prof. H. Wildon), [obituary articles], 98, 99
- Carré (P.), and P. Mauclère, The Chloride of Acid Ethyl Sulphite and the Neutral Mixed Alkyl Sulphites, 386
- Carrière (E.), and Janssens, Determination of Fluorine as Calcium Fluoride, 806
- Carroll (W. E.), [E. Roberts and], Mexican Hairless Swine, 866
- Carr-Saunders (Prof. A. M.), to continue in the Muirhead Lectureship in Birmingham University, 80
- Carruthers (F. G.), Earwigs and their Forceps, 440
- Carter (G. E. L.), Occurrence of Vanadiferous Nodules on the Coast of South Devon, 42
- Cartwright (W.), [W. E. Alkins and], Experiments in Wire-drawing (1), 554
- Casella (C. F.), and Co., Ltd., A New Pattern of the Fortin Barometer, 732
- Cassie (A. B. D.), [C. R. Bailey and], Infra-Red Absorption Spectrum of Carbonyl Sulphide, 637
- Cassie (A. M.), [E. B. Wedmore, W. B. Whitney, and], Electric Circuit Breaker Research, 675
- Casteret (N.), The Communication of the Trou du Toro with the Gouëils de Jouéou, the Source of the Garonne, 682



- Catcheside (D. G.), Chromosome Linkage in a Triploid *Oenothera*, 460; [Prof. R. R. Gates and], Origin of Chromosome Linkage in *Oenothera*, 637
- Cathcart (Dr. G. C.), The Treatment of Chronic Deafness by the Electro-phonoïde Method of Zünd-Burguet. Second edition, 563
- Cattan (R.), [J. Troisier and], Exanthematic Fever in Man, without Visible Symptoms, caused by *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*, 422
- Cauchois (Mlle. Yvette), [H. Hulubei and], The Monochromatic Stimulation of Raman Spectra in the Ultra-Violet, 315
- Cave (Capt. C. J. P.), Unusual Lightning, 378
- Cave (Capt. C. J. P.), [J. E. Clark, I. D. Margary, R. Marshall, L. C. W. Bonacina, and], Phenological Observations in the British Isles from Dec. 1929 to Nov. 1930, 917
- Cave-Browne-Cave (Wing-Comdr. T. R.), appointed Professor of Engineering at University College, Southampton, 681
- Caven (Prof. R. M.), and Dr. G. D. Lander, Systematic Inorganic Chemistry: from the Standpoint of the Periodic Law. New edition, 209
- Cavendish (Henry), 1731-1810, 608
- Cawood (W.), and H. S. Patterson, A Curious Phenomenon shown by Highly Charged Aerosols, 150; [H. S. Patterson, Prof. R. Whytlaw-Gray, and], The Atomic Weight of Fluorine, 375
- Cayrol (J.), and L. Genevois, The Specific Inhibition of the Alcoholic Fermentation of Yeast Cells without Arrest of the Respiration, etc., 199
- Cayrol (P.), Action of Various Halogen Derivatives on Alcoholic Fermentation, 770
- Cella (P.), [G. B. Bonino and], Raman Spectra of Hydrogenated Derivatives of Naphthalene, 1051
- Chadwick (Dr. J.), [Sir Ernest Rutherford [Lord Rutherford], Dr. C. D. Ellis, and], Radiations from Radioactive Substances, 3
- Chamié (Mlle. C.), and Mlle. A. Korvezee, The Centrifugation of Solutions of Polonium in the Presence of Various Electrolytes, 82
- Champion (H. G.), and B. D. Pant, Seeds and Seedlings of Sål, 1080
- Chance Bros. and Co., Ltd., Coloured Grass as a Deterrent to House Flies, 277
- Chandler (Prof. A. C.), Introduction to Human Parasitology. Fourth edition, 323
- Chapman (F.), Two New Australian Fossil King-crabs, 683; and Irene Crespin, New Species of *Lepidocyclus*: *L. hamiltonensis* and *L. howchini*, 683
- Chapman (Prof. S.), Phenomena of the Upper Atmosphere (Bakerian Lecture), 415; Some Phenomena of the Upper Atmosphere (Bakerian Lecture), 464
- Charaux (C.), and J. Rabaté, The Biochemical Study of the Genus *Salix*, 199
- Charlesworth (Prof. J. K.), Quaternary Ice Margins (North Sea), 498
- Charlot (J.), [E. H. Morris, Ann Axtell Morris, and], The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itzá, Yucatan, 694
- Chaudron (G.): [E. Herzog and], The Protection by Cathode Polarisation of Iron dipped into Aerated Saline Solutions, 882; [J. Hérenguel and], The Preparation of Pure Magnesium by Sublimation, 1013; [P. Jolibois and], A New Method for getting Calcium Triphosphate in a Soluble Form, 315
- Chaze (J.), Excretion of Nicotine from the Aerial Parts of the Tobacco Plant, 82
- Cheisin (E.), Some New Marine Infusoria, Symbiotic in Molluscs of Lake Baikal, 163
- Chen (K. K.), and C. F. Schmidt, Ephedrine and Related Substances, 629
- Chesley (K. C.), [H. V. Anderson and], X-Ray Analysis of Slate, 1043
- Childe (Prof. V. Gordon), South Russian Steppe Graves, 190; The Prehistoric Colonists of Yorkshire and their Economics, 776
- Chinchalkar (S. W.), [Sir C. V. Raman and], A New Type of Magnetic Birefringence, 758
- Chipp (Dr. T. F.), [death], 13; [obituary article], 141
- Chippindale (H. G.), Latency of Seedlings in Some Grasses, 1075
- Chittenden (Prof. R. H.), The Development of Physiological Chemistry in the United States, 90
- Chitwood (B. G.), [J. R. Christie and], A Nematode Parasite of a Lucanid Beetle, 910
- Chlopin (V.), and A. Ratner, Distribution of a Dissolved Substance between the Crystalline and the Fluid Phase, 387
- Chodat (F.), Action of Light upon Cellular Permeability, 126; and Suzanne Kann, The Diurnal Course of Transpiration of Two Alpine Plants, 126
- Choucrour (Mlle.), The Hypothesis of Mitogenetic Radiation acting on the Multiplication of Bacteria, 316
- Chrétien (A.), The Dielectric Constant and Chemical Constitution, 163
- Christensen (C. F.), The Whaling Factory Ship *Vikingen*, with Some Notes on Whaling, 56
- Christie (J. R.), and B. G. Chitwood, A Nematode Parasite of a Lucanid Beetle, 910
- Clark (Lt.-Col. E. Kitson), Humanity under the Hammer, 790
- Clark (J. E.), I. D. Margary, R. Marshall, Capt. C. J. P. Cave, and L. C. W. Bonacina, Phenological Observations in the British Isles from Dec. 1929 to Nov. 1930, 917
- Clark (Prof. W. E. Le Gros), Physical Anthropology of the American Indian, 740
- Clarke (Prof. F. W.), [death], 59; [obituary article], 214
- Clarke (S. G.), and W. N. Bradshaw, The Calcium Fluoride Method for the Determination of Fluoride, 1086
- Clarke (S. H.), The Tertiary Wall of Wood Fibres, 1078
- Clements (F.), The Correlation between Tanning and Unexposed Skin Colour as recorded by the Colour Top, 423
- Clendening (Dr. L.), The Human Body. Second edition, 173
- Clinch (Phyllis), Cytological Studies of Potato Plants affected with Certain Virus Diseases, 198
- Coblentz (W. W.), R. Stair, and J. M. Hogue, The Spectral Erythemic Reaction of the Human Skin to Ultra-violet Radiation, 555
- Cocchinaras (N. E.), Composition of Linseed Oil, 1086
- Codrington (K. de B.), Indian Terra-cottas, 414
- Cogné [Picon and], Study of Some Sulphides of the Rare Earths, 882
- Coker (Prof. E. G.), Stresses in Wheels, 174
- Colles [Gibson and], Organic Compounds of Gold, 840
- Collet (Mlle. Paule), and G. Foëx, Influence of the Field on the Magnetic States of Platinum, 82
- Compton (Prof. A. H.), Radioactivity and the Atomic Nucleus, 3
- Constable (A. D.), Use of Electric Propulsion in High-speed Liners, 16
- Conway (Prof. A. W.), The Influence of the Work of Sir William Rowan Hamilton on Modern Mathematical Thought, 198
- Cook (M.), and E. C. Larke, Physical Testing of Copper and Copper-rich Alloys in the Form of Thin Strip, 554
- Cooke, Jr. (C. M.), and H. E. Crampton, New Species of *Partula*, 36
- Cooke (H. C.), W. F. James, and J. B. Mawdsley, Precambrian Rocks of Quebec, 1006
- Cooke, Troughton, and Simms, Ltd., "The Orientator", 102
- Coolidge (T. B.), Oxidation Reduction Potential of Complex Iron Compounds in Yeast, 223
- Coomaraswamy (Dr. A.), Yakas, 71
- Copeman (P. v. d. R.), Oranges and Arsenates, 120; and F. J. Dillman, Decomposition of Guano, 682
- Copisarow (Dr. M.), Dehydration of Salts, 838; Matter: Life: Mind, 1042
- Coppens (C. A.), [J. Schonland and], Point Discharge Measurements below Thunderstorms, 200
- Corbellini (A.), Stereoisomerism of Derivatives, etc., 1014
- Cornish (Dr. Vaughan), The Poetic Impression of Natural Scenery, 656
- Costantin (J.), P. Lebard, and J. Magrou, Influence of a Period in the Mountains on the Productivity of the Potato, 1086



- Cotton (A.), Comparison of the Magnetic Rotations of Crystallised Quartz and Fused Quartz, 81
- Couch (J. N.), Symbiosis of Fungus and Scale Insect, 119
- Coulston (Daphne L.), A New Colorimetric Method for measuring the Hydrogen Ion Concentration of Natural Waters, 316; The Metabolism of Cold-blooded Animals, 316; The Splenectomy of Tadpoles, 316; Variations of the Hydrogen Ion Concentration of Sea Water, 316
- la Cour (D.), Tide-Gauge Measurements of Height Differences, 875
- Cournot (J.), [L. Guillet, A. Roux, and], The Influence of Occluded Gases on the Mechanical Properties of Metallurgical Products, 978
- Coville (Dr. F. V.), awarded the George Robert White Gold Medal of Honor, 1034
- Cowan (Lt.-Col. S. H.), appointed Lecturer in Forest Engineering in Edinburgh University, 880
- Cowley (Sir Arthur E.), [death], 666
- Cox (L. R.), Eocene Mollusca of North-west India, 460
- Craft (F. A.), The Physiography of the Shoalhaven River Valley (1), 279; Physiography of the Shoalhaven River Valley (2, 3), 387
- Craig (J. I.), The Elements of Analytical Geometry. Vol. 1: Straight Line and Circle, 52
- Crampton (H. E.), [C. M. Cooke, Jr., and], New Species of *Partula*, 36
- Craster (Dr. H. H. E.), elected Bodley's Librarian, Oxford University, 768
- Crawford (M. F.), [Prof. J. C. McLennan, J. B. Leppard, and], Nuclear Moments of the Isotopes of Lead: Relative Values of the  $g(I)$  Factors of Pb(207) and Tl, 301
- Crawshay (R.), The Spore Ornamentation of the Russulas, 891
- Creighton (Harriet B.), and Barbara McClintock, A Correlation of Cytological and Genetical Crossing-over in *Zea mays*, 1014
- Cremer (H. W.), appointed Honorary Secretary of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, 756
- Crespin (Irene), [F. Chapman and], New Species of *Lepidocyclus*, *L. hamiltonensis* and *L. Nowchini*, 683
- Creusot [A. Mailhe and], The Transformation of Benzene into Methane, 422; The Transformation of Toluene and of Xylene into Methane, 466
- Crew (Prof. F. A. E.), [J. N. Pickard and], The Scientific Aspects of Rabbit Breeding, 512
- Crompton (Col. R. E. B.), The First Central Electric Power Station in England, 140
- Crompton (W. M.), Hippopotamus Figures from Ancient Egypt, 273
- Crookshank (Dr. F. G.), Epidemiological Essays, 323
- Cross (Dr. F. R.), [death], 179
- Crowfoot (Mrs. Grace M.), Hand-spinning in Egypt and the Sudan, 71
- Crowther (J. G.), An Outline of the Universe, 627
- Cullen (Dr. W.), Gold Resources of the World, 4
- Culver (Prof. C. A.), Electricity and Magnetism: an Advanced Text-book for Colleges, 629
- Cunliffe (Dr. P. W.), An Apparatus for recording the Ultra-Violet Light of the Sky, 35
- Cunningham (Dr. Brysson): Development of the Hudson Bay Region and the North-west Territories of Canada, 53; Influence of Modern Hydro-Electric Power Development on the British Coal Trade, 397
- Cunningham (G. H.), The Gasteromycetes of Australasia (11): The Phallales (Pt. 2), 280; (12), 595; (13), 918
- Cunningham (J. T.), The Double Lateral Line of *Lepidosiren*, 377
- Curie (M.), and A. Lepape, The Thermal Conductivity of the Rare Gases, 1050; and M. Prost, The Radiation accompanying the Hydration of Quinine Sulphate, 386
- Curie (Mme. Irène), and M. Lecoq, A New Gaseous Compound of Polonium, 199
- Curnow (Dr. I. J.), The World Mapped: being a Short History of Attempts to map the World from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century, 289
- Cushing (Prof. H.), conferment upon, of an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Berne, 681
- Cushing (H.), Action of Atropine in counteracting the Effects of Pituitrin and of Pilocarpine injected into the Cerebral Ventricles, 280; Reaction to Posterior Pituitary Extract (Pituitrin) when introduced into the Cerebral Ventricles, 280; Similarity in the Response to Posterior Lobe Extract (Pituitrin) and to Pilocarpine when injected into the Cerebral Ventricles, 280; The Counteractive Effect of Tribromethanol (Avertin) on the Stimulating Response to Pituitrin injected in the Ventricle, 422; The Method of Action of Pituitrin introduced into the Ventricle, 422
- Cushman (Dr. J. A.), Atlantic Foraminifera, 798; and J. D. Barksdale, Tertiary Foraminifera, 1080
- Cuthbertson (J. W.), [H. O'Neill and], The Work-hardening Capacity and Elongation Properties of Copper, 595
- Dachert (A.), Positive Eugenics in Practice, 147
- Dakin (Prof. W. J.), A New Bopyrid Parasite from the Coast of N.S.W., 595; The Composition of the Blood of Aquatic Animals and its bearings upon the possible conditions of Origin of the Vertebrates, 66; and Mahalah G. C. Fordham, A New and Peculiar Marine Nemertean from the Australian Coast, 796
- Dalby (Prof. W. E.), Power and the Internal Combustion Engine, 886
- Dale (Dr. H. H.), Biology and Civilisation (Norman Lockyer Lecture), 897; Science and Curative Medicine (Stephen Paget Memorial Lecture), 499; The Biological Nature of the Viruses, 599
- Daley (C.), Food of Australian Aborigines, 762
- Daly (B.), [Prof. J. Reilly, P. J. Drumm, and], Diazotisation of Aminophenylpyrazoles, 162
- Dalziel (Dr. J. M.), [J. Hutchinson and], Flora of West Tropical Africa. Vol. 2, Part 1, 952
- Damant (Capt. G. C. C.), Modern Diving Devices, 324
- Damiens (A.), A New Porcelain without Silica, based on Pure Fluorspar, 82
- Dampier (Sir William), appointed Secretary of the Agricultural Research Council, 299; Dairy Research, 1071
- Daniel (Dr. R. J.), Musculature of Crustacea, 970
- Daniels (E. J.), The Attack on Mild Steel in Hot-Galvanising, 594
- Dannenberg (Prof. A.), Geologie der Steinkohlenlager. Band 2, Teil 2, 816
- Darby (Dr. H. C.), appointed University Lecturer in Geography in Cambridge University, 1011
- Darrow (K. K.), La synthèse des ondes et des corpuscles. Introduction et des notes par M. Boll, 629
- Dartayet (M.), [Prof. J. Hartmann and], The Recent Opposition of Eros, 550
- Darwin (Dr. Erasmus), Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of, 931
- Darzens (G.), A Method of Separating the Cresols and the Properties of Pure *m*-Cresol, 315; and A. Lévy, The Direct Bromination of Metacresol, 555
- Das (Dr. A. K.), B. B. Ray, and D. N. Dasgupta, Measurement of Pressure and Temperature in the Upper Atmosphere, 878
- Dasgupta (D. N.), [Dr. A. K. Das, B. B. Ray and], Measurement of Pressure and Temperature in the Upper Atmosphere, 878
- Datching (T.), The Purification of the Protactinium fixed on Tantalum Oxide, etc., 466
- Datta (B. B.), [Dr. B. B. Ray and], Part-Absorption in X-Rays, 224
- Datta (S.), [Prof. D. M. Bose and], Absorption Spectra of the Ce<sup>+++</sup> Ion in Solution, 270; [Prof. D. M. Bose and], Raman Lines due to Co-ordination Bond, 725
- David (P.), A Valve Generator with very Stable Frequency, 82
- Davies (D.), [obituary article], 403
- Davies (Dr. S. J.), and E. Giffen, awarded the Crompton Medal of the Institution of Automobile Engineers, 635
- Davies (W. L.), Determination of Chlorides in Dairy Products and Biological Material, 733
- Davison (Dr. C.), The Idu (Japan) Earthquake of Nov. 26, 1930, 552; The Japanese Earthquake of 1923, 989



- Davison (E. H.), Handbook of Cornish Geology. Second edition, 779
- Dawe (Dr. F. Sherwill), The Comma Butterfly in England, 760
- Dawson (B. H.), Sigma Scorpii, 1081
- Dawson of Penn (Lord), appointed a member of the Medical Research Council, 184
- Deacon (G. E. R.), Velocity of Deep Currents in the South Atlantic, 267
- Deane (C.), Trichopterygida of Australia and Adjacent Islands, 387
- Debucquet (L.), and L. Velluz, Organic Compounds of Tungsten and Molybdenum containing Sulphur, 422
- Decker (M.), The Synthesis of Bichler and Napieralski, 467
- Decoux (B.), A Piezoelectric Quartz Frequency Meter with Synchronous Modulation, 386; and P. Le Corbeiller, A Self-maintained Electrical System Utilising a Neon Tube, 978
- Dehalu (M.), Observation of the Total Eclipse of the Moon on April 2, 1931, at Cointe, 846
- Deimel (Prof. R. F.), Mechanics of the Gyroscope, 289
- Dejardin (G.), Extension of the Spectrum Sensibility of Photoelectric Cells under the Action of Oxygen, 83; Utilisation of Ultra-Violet Light in Photoelectric Cells with Glass Bulbs, 83
- Delanoë (P.), The Jackal and Hedgehog Reservoirs of the Moroccan Spirochæte, *Sp. hispanicum* var. *marocanum*, 770
- Delanunay (Prof. H.), Nitrogenous Excretion in Invertebrates, 306
- Dellbridge (J. H.), [death], 960
- Delporte (E.), Atlas céleste, 690
- Demassieux (Mme. N.), and V. Henri, The Ultra-Violet Absorption Spectra of Pure Hydrochloric Acid and Bromine, 882
- Demerec, Mutable Genes in Delphinium, 676
- Demetrovič (B.), Some Experiments concerning the Reflection of X-Rays, 882
- Demolis (A.), [E. Briner, H. Paillard, and], The Ozonation of Aldehydes and the Theory of Active Molecules, 235
- Denning (late W. F.), [obituary article], 12; a Memorial Tablet to the, 1068
- Deraniyagala (P. E. P.), Evolution in the Chelonia, 273
- Desai (Dr. B. N.), Condition of Sparingly Soluble Substances in Gelatine, 223; and P. M. Barve, Coagulation of Colloids by Electrolytes, 907
- Desai (Manohar S.), The Heat of Dissociation of Fluorine, 34
- Desch (Prof. C. H.), The Social Function of Science, 824
- Deshusses : (J.), [L. Deshusses and], Distribution of the Pyrethrins in the Pyrethrum Flower, 126; (J. and L.), Some Insects specially Injurious to Cultivation in French Switzerland, 467
- Deslandres (Dr. H.), Simple relations between the Molecular Spectrum and the Structure of the Molecule, 199, 315
- Dews (H. C.), The Metallurgy of Bronze, 627
- Dibblee (G. B.), Instinct and Intuition : a Study in Mental Duality, 51
- Dickens (B. G.), [W. B. Mann and], The Thermal Conductivities of Saturated Hydrocarbons in the Gaseous State, 881
- Dickinson (E. W.), and H. W. Grimmitt, Rural Electrification, 902
- Dickinson (H. W.), The Work of Jolliffe and Banks, 698
- Dieke (G. H.), [Prof. R. W. Wood and], Analysis of Complicated Band Spectra with the Aid of Magnetic Rotation Spectra, 545
- Diels (Dr. L.), elected a Corresponding Member of the Field Museum of Natural History, 756
- Dillman (F. J.), [P. R. v. d. R. Copeman and], Decomposition of Guano, 682
- Dillon (T.), and Annie McGuinness, On Alginic Acid : its Mode of Occurrence and its Constitution, 162
- Dingwall (Dr. E. J.), Bryk's Die Beschneidung bei Mann und Weib, 91; The Girdle of Chastity : a Medicohistorical Study, 628
- Dirac (Dr. P. A. M.), A Connexion between Electricity and Magnetism, 586
- Dittler (E.), and O. Kühn, The Genesis of Bauxite in the Upper Sann Valley, 467
- Dixon (Prof. A. C.), elected President of the London Mathematical Society, 868
- Dixon (Prof. W. E.), [death], 295; [obituary article], 401
- Dobb (M.), Current Economic Theory in relation to the Five-Year Plan, 790
- Doladilhe (M.), [C. Achard, A. Boutaric, and], The Physical Properties of the Blood Serum and of the Proteins separated from this Serum, etc., 555
- Dollo (Dr. L.), [obituary article], 57
- Donaldson (Capt. J. M.), elected President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, 147; The Unification of Electric Power Companies, 755
- Donisthorpe (H. St. J.), Additions to the British Coleopterous Fauna, 155
- Donnan (Prof. F. G.), Matter and Radiation, 290; Prausnitz and Reitsstötter's Elektrophorese, etc., 988
- Dony (F.), [A. Picard, E. Stahel, and], The Absorption of the Penetrating Gamma Rays by Lead Screens 12-30 cm. thick, 846
- Douglas (C. K. M.), The Present Position of Weather Forecasting, 768
- Douglas (J. A.), and W. J. Arkell, The Stratigraphical Distribution of the Cornbrash (2), 125
- Douglas (Prof. J. S. C.), [death], 788; [obituary article], 862
- Douglass (Dr. A. E.), Tree-Rings and the Sunspot Cycle, 121
- Douvillé (H.), Some Examples of Evolution, 918
- Dover (C.), Effects of Inadequate Feeding on Insect Metamorphosis, 303
- Downey (Dr. W. E.), [obituary article], 403
- Dowson (W. J.), appointed University Lecturer in Mycology in Cambridge University, 844
- Drakeley (Dr. T. J.), appointed Principal of the Northern Polytechnic, 124
- Dralle (H. E.), The Use of Motive Power in the Rumanian Oilfields, 633
- Drugman (J.), On Different Habits of Fluorite Crystals, 42
- Drumm (P. J.) : The Constitution of Fischer and Bülow's Pyrazole, 162; [Prof. J. Reilly, B. Daly, and], Diazotisation of Aminophenylpyrazoles, 162; [Prof. J. Reilly, M. Hayes, and], Lichenin, 162; [Prof. J. Reilly, N. Noonan, and], The Evaluation of the Menthone Content of Peppermint Oil, 845
- Druyvesteyn (Dr. M. J.), Neon-Helium Bands, 1076
- Dryden, jr. (A. L.), Accuracy in Percentage Representation of Heavy Mineral Frequencies, 422
- Dryden (John), three hundredth anniversary of the birth of, 215
- Drzewina (Mme. Anna), [G. Bohn and], Influence of Metallic Silver on the Calcification of the Larvæ of the Sea-Urchin, 806
- Dubar (L.), The Sensibility of Cuprous Oxide Photoelectric Cells, of the Type with Copper Grid, 918
- Dubois (J.), [A. Bigot and], The Presence of the Ordovician in the Moroccan Anti-Atlas, 555
- Dubusay (R.), and R. Pallu, The Photochemical Oxidation of Sulphur, 646
- Dudden (Dr. H.), the Savilian Chair of Astronomy at Oxford, 681
- Dufay (J.), The Spectrum of the Eclipsed Moon, 978
- Dufraisse (C.), and M. Badoche, Researches on the Dissociable Organic Oxides, 422; The Dissociable Organic Oxides, 503; and R. Buret, The Dissociable Organic Oxides : a Dimethoxyruberene, 163
- Dufton (A. F.), and H. E. Beckett, Measurement of Ultra-Violet Radiation, 223; [H. E. Beckett and], Unusual Lightning, 189
- Du Mez (Prof. A. G.), [Prof. G. L. Jenkins and], Quantitative Pharmaceutical Chemistry : containing Theory and Practice of Quantitative Analysis applied to Pharmacy, 958
- Dunbar (W.), Eighty Years' Rainfall at North Craig Reservoir, Kilmarnock, 917
- Dunn (J. S.), The Oxidation of some Copper Alloys, 594
- Dunnington (F. G.), Formation of a Spark, 1081
- Dupont (J.), and J. J. Guerlain, The Dry Distillation of Peru Balsam, 646
- Durell (C. V.), and A. Robson, Advanced Trigonometry, 92



- Durrans (Dr. T. H.), Cellulose Lacquers, 192; Solvents. Second edition, 958
- Durward (J.), Rotation of 'Dust Devils', 412
- Dushman (Dr. S.), High Vacua, 72
- Dymond (E. G.), appointed Lecturer in Natural Philosophy in Edinburgh University, 880; Polarisation of a Beam of Electrons by Scattering, 149
- Dziewonski (K.), and S. Pizoz, A New Method of Synthesis of Dinaphthopyrone, 279
- Eagle (A.), Matter: Life: Mind, 906
- Eakle (Prof. A. S.), [death], 215
- Earl (J. C.), and Miss T. M. Reynolds, The Celluloses of Two Water Plants, 316
- Earle (F. M.), and others, Methods of Choosing a Career: a Description of an Experiment in Vocational Guidance conducted on Twelve Hundred London Elementary School Children, 393
- Earnshaw (Thomas), a Memorial Tablet to, 215
- Eason (A. B.), Flow and Measurement of Air and Gases. Second edition, 654
- East (E. M.), Immunity to Sugar Cane Mosaic acquired by the Host, 555
- Eastham (L. E. S.), appointed Professor of Zoology in Sheffield University, 1048
- Echeson (Dr. E. G.), [death], 143
- Eddington (Sir Arthur): The Cosmical Constant and the Wave Equation, 763; The Evolution of the Universe, 709; The Expanding Universe, 821; The Mass of the Proton, 1049
- Edge (W. L.), The Theory of Ruled Surfaces, 856
- Edington (Dr. J. W.), appointed Professor of Bacteriology in Sheffield University, 1048
- Edison (Dr. T. A.), [death], 696; [obituary article], 751
- Edkins (Dr. Nora), conferment upon, of the Title of Reader by London University, 805
- Edmundson (C. H.), New Hawaiian Medusæ, etc., 36
- Edwards (A. B.), Geology and Petrology of the Black Spur Area (Healesville), 467
- v. Eekelen (M.), [A. Emmerie, Prof. L. K. Wolff, and], Vitamin A and the Antimony Chloride Reaction, 495
- Einstein (Prof. A.), appointed Rouse Ball Lecturer at Cambridge University for 1931-32, 916
- Elderton (Miss E. M.), conferment upon, of the Title of Reader in Eugenics, 975
- Eldridge (A. A.), Organisation of Scientific Abstracting Services, 1004
- Elford (W. J.), [J. E. Barnard and], The Causative Organism in Infectious Ectromelia, 917
- Elgee (F.), Early Man in North-East Yorkshire, 776
- Eliasberg (P. S.), [S. P. Kostychev, V. Gvaladze, and], The Formation of Pyruvic Acid in Lactic Fermentation, 127
- Elkin (A. P.), Rock-Paintings in North-West Australia, 419
- Elliott (Charlotte), Manual of Bacterial Plant Pathogens, 953
- Elliott (K. A. C.), [Sir F. Gowland Hopkins and], Relation of Glutathione to Cell Respiration with special reference to Hepatic Tissue, 805
- Ellis (B. A.), [Sir Robert Robertson and], Faraday's "Chemical Manipulation", 371
- Ellis (Dr. C. D.): [Sir Ernest Rutherford [Lord Rutherford], Dr. J. Chadwick, and], Radiations from Radioactive Substances, 3; [Lord Rutherford and], Origin of  $\gamma$ -Rays, 415, 805
- Elmen (G. W.), New High Permeability Alloys, 764
- Elmhirst (R.), Studies in the Scottish Marine Fauna, 42
- Elton (C.), Animal Ecology and Evolution, 243
- Emery, Bacterial Origin of the Tumours of the Elm, 422
- Emmerie (A.), M. v. Eekelen, and Prof. L. K. Wolff, Vitamin A and the Antimony Chloride Reaction, 495
- Engledow (Prof. F. L.), "Of composts shall the Muse disdain to sing?", 854; The Policy of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, 184
- Englert (E.), [Prof. W. Gerlach and], A New Relation between Electrical Resistance and Energy of Magnetisation, 151
- Enström (A. Y.), Research in Industry and Rationalisation, 122
- Epstein (D.): [J. W. C. Gunn, E. Epstein, G. Rimer, and], The Adrenal Secretion of *Xenopus laevis*, 126; [J. W. C. Gunn and], The Reaction of *Xenopus* to Digitalis, 126
- Epstein (E.), [D. Epstein, J. W. C. Gunn, G. Rimer, and], The Adrenal Secretion of *Xenopus laevis*, 126
- Erlang (A. K.), Udgivet ved R. E. H. Rasmussen, Femcifrede Logaritmer og Antilogaritmer, 91
- Esclanton (E.), Observation of the Eclipse of the Moon of Sept. 26, 1931, made in Haute-Provence, 806
- Esclanton (F.): A Method of Measuring an Alternating High-frequency Magnetic Field, 882; The Theory of the Discharge without Electrodes, 82; [L. and E. Bloch, P. Lacroute, and], Observation of the Zeeman Effect with High Frequency, 386
- Essig (Prof. E. O.), A History of Entomology, 655
- Evans (I. H. N.), Balun Bidai, 762
- Evans (J. W.), The Biology and Morphology of the Eurymelinæ (Cicadelloidea, Homoptera), 387
- Evans (Ü. R.): The Passivity of Iron, 1062; Thin Films in relation to Corrosion Problems, 489
- Ewald (P. P.), und C. Hermann, Strukturbericht, 1913-1928, 511
- Ewen (C. L'Estrange), A History of Surnames of the British Isles: a Concise Account of their Origin, Evolution, Etymology, and Legal Status, 891
- Ewing (Sir Alfred): Power, 567; elected President of the British Association, 1932, 575; The Life and Work of Sir Charles Parsons, 932
- Fabry (Prof. C.), An Interferential Level without an Air Bubble, 466; elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Society, 64
- Fairfield (Dr. D.), Exploring for Plants, 52
- Fairley (A. S.), Stellar Photometry, 461
- Fajans (Prof. K.): Radioelements and Isotopes: Chemical Forces and Optical Properties of Substances, 948; and K. Wüst. Translated by B. Topley. A Textbook of Practical Physical Chemistry, 852
- Falconer (Sir Robert), elected President of the Royal Society of Canada, 276
- Fallows (Fearon), centenary of the death of, 143
- Fantham (Prof. H. B.), awarded the South Africa Medal of the South African Association, 29; presented with the South Africa Medal and grant, 801; New Game Reserves in South Africa, 992
- Faraday, Michael, a letter of, relating to a rumoured knighthood, 697
- Farrington (B.), Vesalius on Vivisection, 125
- Faustino (L. A.), [F. Talavera and], Industrial Shells of the Philippines, 676
- Fawcett (Prof. C. B.), The Distribution of Urban Population in Great Britain, 1070
- Fay (C. R.), Youth and Power: the Divisions of an Economist, 955
- Fayet (G.), The Proximities of Cometary Orbits and the Orbit of Pluto, 163
- de Fazi (R.), and A. Hemmeler, Reactions between Organic and Mineral Compounds (1), 43
- Feigl (Dr. F.), Qualitative Analyse mit Hilfe von Tüpfelreaktionen: theoretische Grundlagen und praktische Ausführung, 987
- Fenn (L. A.), National Needs, 909
- Fenner (Dr. C.), The Rift Valleys of South Australia, 155
- Ferguson (Dr. Allan), Review of "James Clerk Maxwell: A Commemorative Volume," 607
- Fersman (A.), A New Law on the Composition of Granitic Pegmatites, 683
- Field (Elsie H.), Reactions of Dermal Melanophores in *Necturus* to heat and to cold, 163
- Field (G. S.), Velocity of Sound in Tubes: Ultrasonic Method, 117
- Field (Prof. K.), Interconnexion of Electric Light and Power Supply Companies, 297
- Fikry (Dr. M. A.), Cross-Pollination in Cotton, 1080
- Filippov (G.), [G. A. Nadson and]: The Formation of the New Stable Races of Micro-organisms under the influence of X-rays (2), 422; (3), 467
- Filitti (Mlle. Sabine), The Determination of the Charge of the Micelle, 386



- Findlay (Prof. A.), Practical Physical Chemistry. Fifth edition, 959
- Findlay (W. M.), Disease-resisting Turnips, 414
- Fink and Weinfurter, Methylene Blue Stain for Yeast Cells, 306
- Fisher (Dr. R. A.), Evolution of Dominance, 1079
- Fisher (W. K.), South American Sea Stars, 154
- Fitch (A. A.), Metallurgical Spectrum Analysis, 802
- Fitzpatrick (Rev. Dr. T. C.), [death], 788
- FitzSimons (F. W.), Discovery of Fossil Bushmen in the Zuurberg Mountains, 611
- Flack (Group-Capt. Martin), [obituary article], 402
- Flammarión (Mme. G. Camille), Photographs of the Planet Mercury, 82
- Flerov (K. K.), The Elks (*Alces* Gray) of the Old World, 503; The Generic Character in the family Tragulidæ (Mammalia, Artidaactyla), 503
- Flett (Sir John S.), elected President of the Mineralogical Society, 834
- Flexner (Dr. A.), Universities: American, English, German, 811
- Florentin (D.), [A. Kling and], The Mode of Action of Dehydrating Catalysts in the Hydrogenating Cracking of Phenols, 1050
- Floreys (Dr. J.), appointed Professor of Pathology in Sheffield University, 1048
- Foerster (Prof. F.), [obituary article], 752
- Foëx (G.): [Mlle. Paula Collet and], Influence of the Field on the Magnetic States of Platinum, 82; and Mlle. B. Kessler, The various Magnetic States of the Nickel Ion in Solutions of its Chloride, 315
- Foord (S. G.), [Dr. E. J. B. Willey and], An Oxidisable Active Nitrogen, 493
- Forbes (A. C.), Forestry Practice and Research, 31
- Fordham (A. A.), Civil Engineering Design, 962
- Fordham (Mahalah G. C.), [Prof. W. J. Dakin and], A New and Peculiar Marine Nemertean from the Australian Coast, 796
- Forel (Prof. A.), [death], 215
- Forestier (H.), and M. Galand, Beryllium Ferrite and the Ferric Oxide arising from its Decomposition, 978
- Forster (Dr. M. O.), Service at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, extended, 1049
- Fosse (R.), A. Brunel, and P. E. Thomas, Application of the Quantitative Spectrophotometric Analysis of Allantoin, 421; The Quantitative Analysis of Very Small Quantities of Allantoin at High Dilutions, 315
- Foster (Sir Gregory, Bart.), [death], 576; [obituary article], 665
- Fotheringham (Dr. J. K.), A New History of Astronomy, 986; Motion of the Perihelion of Mercury, 841
- Fournier (G.), The Translation of Light Intensities, 234
- Fowler (Prof. A.), and J. S. Badami, Spectrum of the Hydrogen-nitrous Oxide Flame, 881; and W. M. Vaidya, Spectrum of Carbon Disulphide Flames, 192
- Fowler (R. H.): Quantum-Mechanical Models of a Nucleus, 453; The Photoelectric Effect, 415
- Fox (A. L.), The Taste of Thioureas, 124
- Fox (Dr. C. S.), The Gondwana System, 763
- Fox (Prof. E. L.), [death], 486
- Fradin (É.), Dropping in the Prosecution of, for the Glozel alleged Antiquities, 60
- Fraipont (Prof. C.), Cerebral Evolution of the Primates, with special reference to the Hominidæ, 61
- Francis (E. L.), and Prof. F. C. Thompson, The Drawing of Non-ferrous Wires, 554
- Francis (W. L.), Studies in Membrane Behaviour (1), 1049
- Frank-Kamenetskii (A.), and V. Konceirch, The Chemical Composition of the Water of the Hot Springs in Northern Transbaikalia, 422
- Franklin (Prof. W. S.), and Prof. G. E. Grantham, General Physics, 134
- Fraser-Harris (Dr. D. F.), Medical Pioneers in Science, 864
- Frazier (R. P.), [Prof. W. A. Bone, W. H. Wheeler, and], Flame Propagation in an Electric Field, 274
- Freed (S.), Absorption Spectra of Crystals at Low Temperatures as References in the Measurement of Stellar Velocities, 33
- Freeland (D. M.), The Determination of Vanillin in Chocolate and Cocoa Butter, 845
- Freeman (H.), An Elementary Treatise on Actuarial Mathematics, 286
- Freri (M.), [A. Quilico and], Azopyrrole Blacks (3), 595
- Freundlich (Prof. E.): Eclipse Observations and the Einstein Shift, 1045; The Deflexion of Light in the Sun's Gravitational Field, 993
- Frisch (S.), [Prof. R. de L. Kronig and], Nuclear Moments, 228
- Frivold (Dr. O. E.), and S. Koch, The Magneto-Electric Saturation Effect, 675
- Fromageot (C.), and A. Porcherel, Action of Pancreation upon Different Types of Wool, 1013
- Fuchs (Dr. W.), Die Chemie der Kohle, 1024
- Fujii (Prof. K.), elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, 834
- Fuller (Mary E.), The Life-history of *Calliphora ochracea* Schiner (Diptera, Calliphoridae), 280
- Funk (N. E.), The Economic Advantages of the Inter-connexion of Electric Power Stations, 669
- Fürlinger (F.), [P. Krüger and], Histology and Chemistry of Tetanus and Tonus Substratum, 468
- Gabillion (R.), Soies artificielles et matières plastiques, 855
- Gagnasso (A.), [L. Cambi and], Cobalt Nitrosodithiocarbamates, 683
- Galand (M.), [H. Forestier and], Beryllium Ferrite and the Ferric Oxide arising from its Decomposition, 978
- Gallagher (Catharine), [W. D. Bancroft, J. W. Ackerman, and], Optical Sensitisation, 846
- Gallenkamp and Co., Ltd., Catalogue of Chemical and Industrial Laboratory Apparatus, 757
- Galopin (E.), Use of the Polarising Microscope in the Determination of Organic Substances, 734
- Garbett (Commr. L. G.), Observations of Upper Winds over the Oceans, 62
- Gardiner (A. C.), [R. Southern and], Reports from the Limnological Laboratory (2), 1013
- Gardiner (Prof. J. Stanley), Coral Reefs and Atolls: being a Course of Lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute at Boston, February 1930, 206; elected a Trustee of the British Museum, 299; The Harvard Museum Expedition to Australia, 457
- Gardiner (M. S.), [D. H. Tennant, D. E. Smith, and], Nature of Golgi Substance, 728
- Gardner (N. L.), [W. A. Setchell and], Marine Algæ from the Pacific, 191
- Garner (Prof. W. E.), Activated Adsorption, 583
- Garratt (Prof. G. A.), The Mechanical Properties of Wood, 961
- Garreau (Mlle. Y.), [J. Parrod and], The Oxidation Products of *d*-Mannose by Ammoniacal Copper Oxide in the Presence of Air, 1050
- Garrod (Miss D. A. E.), Work of the British School of Archaeology in Palestine, 297
- Garstang (Prof. J.), Joshua: Judges, 938
- Garstang (T. E.), renewal to, of the Sir George Jessel Studentship of Mathematics in London University, 161
- Garstang (W. L.), and H. L. Hinshelwood, Combination of Hydrogen and Oxygen, 1044
- Gask (Prof. G. E.), address to the Students of the School of Pharmacy of the Pharmaceutical Society, 667
- Gassendi, the Transit of Mercury, and, 787
- Gatenby (Prof. J. B.): Outgrowths from Pieces of *Helix aspersa*, the Common Snail, 1002; and Joyce C. Hill, Effect of certain Substances and of Heat on Cells of *Abraxas*, 31
- Gates (Prof. R. R.), and D. G. Catcheside, Origin of Chromosome Linkage in *Oenothera*, 637
- Gatty [Post and], Flight round the Earth, 60
- Geddes (Sir Eric), Mass Production, 182
- Geddes (Prof. P.), [Sir J. Arthur Thomson and], Life: Outlines of General Biology. 2 Vols., 1056
- Geijer (Dr. P.), Gällivare malmfält geologisk beskrivning, 384
- Geilinger (Dr. W.), Der Kilimandjaro: sein Land und seine Menschen, 956
- Genevois (L.), [J. Cayrol and], The Specific Inhibition of the Alcoholic Fermentation of Yeast Cells without Arrest of the Respiration, etc., 199



- George (Prince), address at the opening of the new Ramsay Memorial Laboratory of Chemical Engineering at University College, 932
- George (T. N.), The British Carboniferous Reticulate Spiriferidæ, 1012
- Gerasimovic (B.), Probability Theorems connected with the Discovery of Variable Stars by a Photographic Method, 682
- Gerlach (Prof. W.), and E. Englert, A New Relation between Electrical Resistance and Energy of Magnetisation, 151
- Gessner (Dr. H.), Die Schlämmanalyse, 1061
- Gevers (Dr. T. W.), Pre-Cambrian Tillite in South-west Africa, 191
- Gheury de Bray (M. E. J.), Elementary Hyperbolics: for Technical and other Students; specially adapted to the requirements of Beginners. 2 Vols., 1026
- Ghosh (Prof. Ekendranath) and Birendrakumar Mitra, Anterior Abdominal Vein in the Toad, 273
- Ghosh (J. C.), The Indian Education Problem, 681
- Gianfranceschi (Prof.), The Origin of Penetrating Rays, 581
- Gibbs (G. J.), Records of Actinic Value of Daylight, 35
- Gibson (late Prof. G. A.), Advanced Calculus: a Sequel to an Elementary Treatise on the Calculus, 851
- Gibson and Colles, Organic Compounds of Gold, 840
- Gideon (P. W.), An Introduction to Zoology, 952
- Gidley (Dr. J. W.), [death], 788
- Giffen (E.), [Dr. S. J. Davies and], awarded the Crompton Medal of the Institution of Automobile Engineers, 635
- Gilard (P.), The Ultra-Violet Transmission of Glasses, 846
- Gill (H. A.), The Cost of Patent Litigation, 790
- Gill (T.), Tropical Forests of the Caribbean, 1059
- Gillbe (Dr. H. F.), Jubilee Celebrations of the Society of Chemical Industry, 157
- Gilmour (J. S. L.), appointed Assistant Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 756
- Gisolf (J. H.), [Prof. P. Zeeman, T. L. de Bruin, and], Magnetic Resolution and Nuclear Moment of Rhenium, 637
- Giuntini (J.), The Spectrographic Study of the Compounds of Tartaric Acid and Copper, 646
- Glaister (Prof. J.), Hairs and Wools, 227
- Glanville (S. R. K.), Unofficial Moments of a Great Archaeologist, 131
- Glasser (Dr. O.), Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen und die Geschichte der Röntgenstrahlen. Mit einem Beitrag: Persönliches über W. C. Röntgen, mit Margret Boveri, 629
- Glazebrook (Sir Richard), appointed Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Science Museum, 184; awarded a Royal Medal of the Royal Society, 821; presented with a Royal Medal of the Royal Society, 973; Dr. S. W. Stratton, 928; Standards of Measurement: their History and Development (Guthrie Lecture), 14, 17
- Glazunov (A.), The Nature of a Crystallisation Centre, 128
- Glennie (Major E. A.), Gravity Anomalies, 1004
- Goard (Dr. A. K.), Chemical Composition: an Account of the Methods by which Atomic Weights and Molecular Formulæ have been determined, 958
- Goesse (Prof. J. B.), [death], 666
- Golaz (M.), A New Principle of Hydraulics, 646
- Goldschmidt (Prof. V. M.), Conferment upon, of an Honorary Degree by the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, 756, 833
- Goldstern (Dr. N.), and Dr. F. Putnoky, Illumination in Factories, 1080
- Good (P.), Lessons from the Flood-lighting Display, 822
- Goodland (R.), A Bibliography of Sex Rites and Customs: an Annotated Record of Books, Articles, and Illustrations in all Languages, 892
- Goodrich (Prof. E. S.), The Work of the late Sir Ray Lankester, 64
- Goodwin (A. J. H.), Association and Chronology in Pre-history, 801
- Gordon (Dr. R. G.), [Dr. R. J. A. Berry and], The Mental Defective: a Problem in Social Inefficiency, 954
- Gorini (C.), Acido-proteolytes and Thermophiles in the Pasteurisation of Milk, 43
- Gorman (M. J.), and H. A. Lafferty, On a Method of distinguishing the Seedlings of Swedish Turnip (*Brassica napus* L. var. *napobrassica* (L.) Reichb.) from those of broad-leaved Rape (*Brassica napus* L. var. *biennis* (Schubl et Mart) Reichb.), 162
- Gorter (Dr. C. J.), The Theoretical Magnetron Numbers in Weiss Units, 68
- Gorter (Prof. E.), and W. A. Seeder, A Method of studying Surface Films, 413
- Gortner (R. A.), [H. B. Bull and], Studies on Electrokinetic Potentials (9), 423
- Gosselin (A.), et M. Gosselin, Constitution et thermo-chimie des molécules, 92; (M.), [A. Gosselin et], Constitution et thermo-chimie des molécules, 92
- Grabau (Prof. A. W.), and others, Central Asiatic Expeditions: the Permian of Mongolia, 956
- Grabham (Dr. M. C.), on Lord Kelvin's paper on "The Clustering of Gravitational Matter in any Part of the Universe", 793; Electrical Conditions in Stratified Clouds, 969
- Graff (K.), Visual Measurements on Planetary Colours, 467
- Graham (George), F.R.S., 1673-1751, 435
- Graham (Lieut. R. R.), Air-pressures upon a Bird's Wing, 119
- Grant (Dr. J.), The Measurement of Hydrogen Ion Concentration, 852
- Grant (Prof. Kerr), Rhythmic Breaking of Ship-waves, 838
- Grantham (Prof. G. E.), [Prof. W. S. Franklin and], General Physics, 134
- Gray (Dr. P.), appointed lecturer in zoology (vertebrate embryology) in Edinburgh University, 880
- Gray (P.), appointed a Tutor for Adult Education in Birmingham University, 80
- Gray (Dr. R. W.), Migrations of the Greenland Whale and Narwhal, 798
- Grebel (A.), Automatic Self-tightening Bolts, 846
- Green (Dr. J. B.), and J. Wulff, Hyperfine Structure of Thallium II., 409
- Greene (Dr. R.), Oxygen and Everest, 893
- Greenwood (H.), and Prof. F. C. Thompson, Wires drawn through Rotating Dies, 152
- Greenwood (Dr. T.), Mackaye's The Dynamic Universe, 288; The Development of Formal Logic, 1021; The International Congress of the History of Science and Technology, 77
- Grégoire (Prof. V.), elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, 834
- Gregory (Prof. J. W.): A Century of Geology, 857; African Settlement and the Origin of Rift Valleys, 87; Deep Trench on the North Sea Floor, 37, 792; and B. H. Barrett, General Stratigraphy, 945
- Gregory, Bt. (Sir Richard), History of Glass-making, 697
- Grenet (G.), [E. Mathias and], The Electric Field at the Summit of the Puy de Dôme, 806
- Grenfell (Sir Wilfred), The Uncharted State of Part of the Coast of Labrador, 635
- Gresson (Dr. R. A. R.), appointed Lecturer in Zoology (Cytology) in Edinburgh University, 880
- Griaule (M.), Le livre de recettes d'un dabtara abyssin, 204
- Grieve (B. J.), A Virus Disease of Roses in Australia, 839
- Griffith (A. S.), Experiments with B.C.G. ('Bacille-Calmette-Guérin') Vaccine, 145
- Griffiths (W. T.), [D. G. Jones, L. B. Pfeil, and], Nickel-Copper Alloys of High Elastic Limit, 502
- Grimes (M.), and A. J. Hennerty, Bacteria belonging to the Sub-genus *Aerobacter*, 162
- Grimmitt (H. W.), [E. W. Dickinson and], Rural Electrification, 902
- Grimshaw and Payman, Ignition of Fire-damp by Coal-mining Explosives, 867
- Grimwood (E. J.), [Dr. C. J. Smithells, S. V. Williams, and], Melting Nickel-chromium Alloys in Hydrogen, 595
- Grindley (G. C.), appointed University Demonstrator in Experimental Psychology in Cambridge University, 844
- Grinnell (Dr. J.), re-elected President of the American Ornithologists' Union, 998; The Migration of Birds, 329
- Groom (Prof. P.), [death], 544; [obituary article], 695
- Grubb (Sir Howard), [death], 544; [obituary article], 609



- Grundfest (H.), The Relative Effectiveness of Spectral Radiation for the Vision of the Sun-fish, *Lepomis*, 555
- Guerlain (J. J.), [J. Dupont and], The Dry Distillation of Peru Balsam, 646
- Guha (Dr. B. S.), and P. C. Basu, Human Skulls and Bones from the Naga Hills, 762
- Guilbert (J.), [Mlle. D. van Stolk, H. Péneau, and], Carotene and Vitamin A, 467; [Mlle. D. Van Stolk, H. Péneau, H. Simonnet, and], Pure Carotene and Vitamin A, 199
- Guillet (L.), A. Roux, and J. Cournot, The Influence of Occluded Gases on the Mechanical Properties of Metallurgical Products, 978
- Guillou (J.), [J. Bougault and], Some Reactions of certain Barbituric Derivatives, 770
- Gulevitch (V.), Methyl-guanido-oxalic Acid (Creaton) as a Constituent Part of Muscles, 127
- Gunn (D. L.), Temperature and Humidity Relations of the Cockroach, 186
- Gunn (J. W. C.), and D. Epstein, The Reaction of *Xenopus* to Digitalis, 126; [D. Epstein, E. Epstein, G. Rimer, and], The Adrenal Secretion of *Xenopus laevis*, 126
- Güntherschulze (Prof. A.), and F. Keller, Cathode Phenomena in the Glow Discharge, 840
- Gurney (Dr. R. W.), Quantum Theory of Electrolysis, 1044
- Gutton (C.), and G. Beauvais, Oscillators with very Short Waves, 1013
- Guye (Prof. C. E.), Faraday's Connexion with Switzerland and Swiss Industrial and Economic Development, 349; The Lower Limit of Physico-chemical Phenomena, 279
- Guyot (R.), The Reflection of very Short Electro-magnetic Waves, 503
- Gvaladze (V.), [S. P. Kostychev, P. S. Eliasberg, and], The Formation of Pyruvic Acid in Lactic Fermentation, 127
- Haas (Dr. P.), and Prof. T. G. Hill, Occurrence of Dulcitol in a Red Seaweed, 378
- Hackspill (L.), A. Stieber, and R. Hocart, Crystallised Boron, 1013; and R. Lauffenburger, Action of Heat on the Alkaline Diacid Phosphates, 682
- Haenny (C.), The Magnetic Double Refraction of Paramagnetic Salts in Aqueous Solutions, 1086
- Haïssinsky (M.), A New Reaction of Polonium, 315; The Electrochemical and Chemical Behaviour of Polonium in Tartaric Acid Solution, 199
- Haldane (Prof. J. B. S.), Oxidation by Living Cells, 175
- Hale (H. M.), The Pigmy Right Whale (*Neobalæna*), 910
- Hall (Sir Daniel), The Faith of a Man of Science, 1069
- Hall (E. H.), Electric Conductivity and Optical Absorption in Metals, 555
- Hall (Dr. H. R.), A Season's Work at Ur: al-'Ubaid, Abu Shahrain (Eridu), and Elsewhere; being an Unofficial Account of the British Museum Archaeological Mission to Babylonia, 1919, 131
- Hall (Prof. W. T.), Textbook of Quantitative Analysis, 323
- Halliday (E. L.), Correlations between the Field Changes due to Lightning and the Appearance of the Flashes, 200
- Hambly (W. D.), Serpent Worship, 1043
- Hamilton (Sir William Rowan), The Mathematical Papers of. Vol. 1: Geometrical Optics, edited by Prof. A. W. Conway and Prof. J. L. Synge, 167
- Hampton (W. M.), and W. N. Wheat, Recent Developments in Optical Glass Manufacture, 926
- Hamshere (Dr. J. L.), Photoelectrons and Negative Ions, 871
- Handy (Dr. E. S. C.), Class Distinction in the Society Islands, 459
- Hanson (D.), and I. G. Slater, Unsoundness in Aluminium Sand-castings, 502
- Harada (Isokiti), A New Parasitic Copepod, 37
- Hardt (H. C.), [A. Kailin and], The Velocity of Catalysed Hydrogenation, 467
- Harker (Dr. A.), resignation of, of the Readership in Petrology in Cambridge University, 420
- Harmer (Sir Sidney F.), elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Science, 723; elected an Honorary Member of the Société Zoologique de France, 29; Southern Whaling, 292
- Harris (Prof. D. Fraser), on a lecture by Faraday, 612
- Harris (Dr. H. A.), conferment upon, of the Title of Professor, 975
- Harris (N. L.), and H. G. Jenkins, Discharge Tubes and their Technical Application, 330
- Harris (W. J.), and R. A. Keble, Victorian Graptolite Zones, with Correlations and Descriptions of New Species, 467
- Harrison (T. H.), Speed of Flight of Birds, 586
- Hartley (Sir Harold), and others, Conductivity of Tetraethylammonium and Ammonium Salts, 461; The Behaviour of Electrolytes in Solution, 680
- Hartmann (J.), The Jet-Wave Rectifier, 156
- Hartmann (Prof. J.), and M. Dartayet, The Recent Opposition of Eros, 550
- Hartog (Sir Philip), Joseph Priestley and his Place in the History of Science, 464; Priestley and Lavoisier, 797
- Hartree (Prof. D. R.), Electron Diffraction, 47
- Harvey (A.), [F. Twyman and], The Validity of the Schwarzschild relation as applied to the Use of the Logarithmic Sector, 770
- Harvey (H. W.), [Dr. H. Wettenberg, Dr. K. Buch, and], Apparent Dissociation Constants of Carbon Dioxide in Sea-water of different Salt Contents, 411
- Harwood (H. F.), [Prof. A. Holmes and], Petrology of the Volcanic Fields east and south-east of Ruwenzori, Uganda, 977
- Hatschek (E.), Viscometry, 947
- Haughton (J. L.), and R. J. M. Payne, Transformations in the Gold-copper Alloys, etc., 554
- Hayes (M.), [Prof. J. Reilly, P. J. Drumm, and], Lichenin, 162
- Hazard (R.), [M. Polonovski and], Some Physiological Effects of Chlorotropane, 734
- Heasman (W. J.), appointed Senior Curator of the Cambridge University Museum of Zoology, 161
- Heath (Sir Thomas L.), A Manual of Greek Mathematics, 739
- Hedges (Dr. E. S.), Periodic Physico-Chemical Phenomena, 398
- Heilman (R. H.), [J. B. Barnitt and], Heat Insulation of Furnaces, 971
- Hemmeler (A.), [R. de Fazi and], Reactions between Organic and Mineral Compounds (1), 43
- Henderson (Ross, Posnjak, and), A New Uranium Mineral, 155
- Hendricks (S. B.), [F. C. Kraeck, Dr. E. Posnjak, and], Group Rotation in Solid Ammonium and Calcium Nitrates, 410
- Hendrik (A. C.), and E. F. Burton, A Treatment for Malignant Tumours, 544
- Hendry (G. W.), Adobe Brick Analysis for Plant Contents, 1006
- Hennerty (A. J.), [M. Grimes and], Bacteria belonging to the Sub-genus *Acrobacter*, 162
- Henri (V.), [Mme. N. Demassieux and], The Ultra-Violet Absorption Spectra of Pure Hydrochloric Acid and Bromine, 882
- Henry (A. J.), [death], 788
- Henry (P. S. H.), The Specific Heats of Air, Oxygen, and Nitrogen from 20° C. to 370° C., 1049
- d'Herelle (Prof. F.), translated by Prof. G. H. Smith, The Bacteriophage and its Clinical Applications, 431
- Hérenghel (J.), and G. Chaudron, The Preparation of Pure Magnesium by Sublimation, 1013
- Hermann (C.), [P. P. Ewald und], Strukturbericht, 1913-1928, 511
- Herndon and Pangborn, Non-stop Flight from Japan to the U.S.A., 634
- Herzog (E.), and G. Chaudron, The Protection by Cathode Polarisation of Iron dipped into Aerated Saline Solutions, 882
- Heurtley (W. A.), Work of the British School of Archaeology in Athens, 934
- Hevesy (Prof. G.), and Dr. R. Hobbie, Lead Content of Rocks, 1038
- Hewitt (Prof. W. A. S.), [death], 930
- Hewitt (C. R.), [death], 404
- Hewitt (L. F.), Oxidation-Reduction Potentials in Bacteriology, 73
- Hewlett (Prof. R. T.), Sir William Simpson, 695
- Hey (M. H.), Studies on the Zeolites. Part 2, 42



- Hidaka (K.), Mixing of Warm and Cold Saturated Air, 911  
Hill (Prof. A. V.), Myothermic Experiments on the Frog's Gastrocnemius, 805  
Hill (Joyce C.), [Prof. J. B. Gatenby and], Effect of certain Substances and of Heat on Cells of *Abraxas*, 31  
Hill (Sir Leonard), Group-Capt. Martin Flack, 402, 496; Some Problems of Population, 488  
Hill (Sir Thomas E.), [death], 930  
Hill (Prof. T. G.), The Advancement of Botany, 780; [Dr. P. Haas and], Occurrence of Dulcitol in a Red Seaweed, 378  
Hinchley (Prof. J. W.), [death], 295; [obituary article], 402  
Hinshelwood (H. L.), [W. L. Garstang and], Combination of Hydrogen and Oxygen, 1044  
Hinton (M. A. C.), Rats and Mice as Enemies of Mankind, Third edition, 1036  
Hirayama (K.), Impact of Stars with Nebulae, 156  
Hirst (Mercia C.), [J. B. Speakman and], Constitution of the Keratin Molecule, 1073  
Hitchen (C. S.), [F. Twyman and], Estimation of Dissolved Metals, 587  
Hobbie (Dr. R.), [Prof. G. Hevesy and], Lead Content of Rocks, 1038  
Hobson (Dr. A.), The International Institute of Agriculture, 737  
Hocart (R.), [L. Hackspill, A. Stieber and], Crystallised Boron, 1013  
Hochstadter (M.), W. Vogel, and E. Bowden, An Improved Method of Constructing High-voltage Cables, 933  
Hockin (L. E.), [Prof. M. W. Travers, T. J. P. Pearce and], Influence of Hydrogen on Chemical Changes in Silica Vessels, 66  
Hodges (J. H.), and E. F. Linhorst, The Thermal Decomposition of Nitrogen Pentoxide, 83  
Hodson (Col. T. C.), Training of Colonial Probationers in Anthropology, 458  
Höfding (Prof. H.), [death], 179  
Hoffmann (G.), Fluctuations in Cosmic Radiation, 120  
Hogben (Prof. L.), Acromegaly in the Far North, 375; Historical Aspects of Biology, 132; Principles of Animal Biology, 242  
Hogg (A. R.), Aitken Condensation Nuclei, 908  
Hogue (J. M.), [W. W. Coblenz, R. Stair and], The Spectral Erythemic Reaction of the Human Skin to Ultra-Violet Radiation, 555  
Hollander (Dr. B.), Brain, Mind and the External Signs of Intelligence, 815  
Holmes (Prof. A.), Lead Content of Rocks, 1039; Radioactivity and Earth Movements, 419, 496; The Origin of Acid Igneous Rocks, 120; and H. F. Harwood, Petrology of the Volcanic Fields East and South-east of Ruwenzori, Uganda, 977  
Holmes (Dr. Barbara), Cancer and Scientific Research, 136  
Holmes (Dr. E. G.), appointed University Lecturer in Pharmacology in Cambridge University, 420  
Holmyard (Dr. E. J.), History of Alchemy, 774; Makers of Chemistry, 321  
Holt (Anne), A Life of Joseph Priestley, 625  
Holtedahl (O.), Some General Structural Features of the Arctic and Adjacent Regions, 125  
Holtum (R. E.), Leaf Fall in the Tropics, 798  
Holzknecht (Prof. G.), [death], 788; [obituary], 863  
Homes (M. V. L.), Cellular Permeability, 1005  
Hooton (Dr. E. A.), and others, The Indians of Pecos Pueblo: a Study of their Skeletal Remains, 740  
Hope-Jones (F.), Electric Clocks, 651  
Hopkins (Sir Frederick Gowland), Progressive Biology, 923; recommended for re-election as President of the Royal Society, 864; and K. A. C. Elliott, Relation of Glutathione to Cell Respiration with special reference to Hepatic Tissue, 805; and others, The Chemistry of the Vitamins, 39, 842  
Hopkins (Dr. R. H.), appointed Adrian Brown Professor of Brewing in Birmingham University, 80  
Hopkinson (Dr. E.), Pugnacity of White Specimens of the Australian Zebra-finch, 866  
Hopwood (A. T.), [Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, Prof. H. Reek and], Age of the Oldoway Bone Beds, Tanganyika Territory, 724; New Yields from the Oldoway Bone Beds, Tanganyika Territory, 1075  
Hopwood (Prof. F. Lloyd), Ultrasonics: some Properties of Inaudible Sound, 748  
Hori (Prof. Yosimiti), Orientated Deposits of Copper on Bismuth, 412  
Hotine (Capt. M.), Surveying from Air Photographs, 946  
Houghton (H. G.), Light Transmission through Fog, 1043  
Houston (W. V.), and C. M. Lewis, Rotational Raman Spectrum of CO<sub>2</sub>, 280  
Houstoun (Dr. R. A.), Intermediate Physics, 134  
Hovgaard (W.), Distribution of Stresses in Welded and Riveted connexions, 555  
Hovorka (V.), The Oxidation of Hydrazine and Semi-carbazide by Potassium Iodate, 1013  
Howard (A.), and Yeshwant D. Wad, The Waste Products of Agriculture: their Utilization as Humus, 854  
Howard (Dr. L. O.), awarded the Capper Award, 64  
Howarth (O. J. R.), The British Association for the Advancement of Science: a Retrospect, 1831-1931. Centenary (second) edition, 687  
Howes (Mrs. G. B.), [obituary], 295  
Howlett (L. E.), Raman Spectra of Benzene and Toluene, 796  
Hrdlička (Dr. A.), Skulls of the Pueblo and related Indian Races, 1079  
Hubble and Humason, The Velocities of Distant Nebulae, 1007  
Huber (B.), The Permeability of Protoplasm to Water, 497  
Huffman (R.), Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore, 989  
Hughes (A. W. McKenny), Inheritance of Melanism in Moths, 496  
Huguenard (E.), and A. Magnan, An Ultra-rapid Cinematograph giving from 2000 to 3000 Images per Second, 163  
Hulme (H. R.), elected an Isaac Newton Student in Cambridge University, 804  
Hulubei (H.), and Mlle. Yvette Cauchois, The Monochromatic Stimulation of Raman Spectra in the Ultra-Violet, 315  
Humason [Hubble and], The Velocities of Distant Nebulae, 1007  
Humason (M. L.), The Apparent Recession of the Spiral Nebulae, 461  
Hume-Rothery (Dr. W.), The Macro-etching of Aluminium-silicon Alloys, 503  
Humphrey (D.), Intermediate Mechanics. Vol. 2: Statics and Hydrostatics, 244  
Humphreys (Dr. W. J.), The Melting of Glaciers, 911  
Hunt (H. A.), retirement from position of Meteorologist to the Commonwealth of Australia, 634  
Hunter (P. V.), The Subsidiary Systems connected with the Grid System, 633  
Huntress (Prof. E. H.), A Brief Introduction to the use of Beilstein's Handbuch der organischen Chemie, 136  
Huskins (Prof. C. L.), [Dr. J. Philp and], A Satellite Missing from Ever-Sporting Stocks, 970  
Hutchinson (Prof. A.), elected President of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, 834  
Hutchinson (J.), and Dr. J. M. Dalziel, Flora of West Tropical Africa. Vol. 2, Part 1, 952  
Huxley (Prof. J. S.), Africa View, 87  
Ilchester (Lord), elected a Trustee of the British Museum, 299  
Imai (Yoshitaka), Genetics of Japanese Morning Glory, 497  
Imamura (Dr. Shigemoto), Japanese Nematodes, 586  
Imanishi (S.), Ultra-Violet Absorption and Raman Effect for Hydrazine, 64  
Imms (Dr. A. D.), Control of West Indian Insect Pests, 878  
Ince (Dr. E. L.), appointed Lecturer in Mathematics in Edinburgh University, 880  
Innes (Dr. R. T. A.), A New System of Film Projection, 1048  
Ionescu (T. V.), Ionised Gases and the Working of Valves with Positive Grid, 882  
Irwin (J.), awarded the Duke of Northumberland prize of the Institution of Naval Architects, 768  
Isaacs (Dr. Susan), Intellectual Growth in Young Children, with an Appendix on Children's "Why" Questions, by Nathan Isaacs, 777; [Victoria E. M. Bennett and], Health and Education in the Nursery, 690



- Isbell [Kharasch and], Organic Gold Compounds, 415  
 Ito (T.), and T. Shiga, on Scorodite from Kiura Mine, Bungo, Kiushiu, Japan, 977  
 Iyer (Rao Bahadur L. K. Ananthakrishna), [the late H. V. Nanjundayya and], The Mysore Tribes and Castes. Vol. 3, 50
- Jackson (D. A.), Hyperfine Structure in the Rubidium Spectrum, 34  
 Jacob (C. T.), Control of Prickly-Pear by the Cochineal Insect, 117  
 Jacobs [King and], The Oxidation of Iodide by Per-sulphate, 121  
 Jacobsen (Dr. J. C.), A Counting Device for Use with the Geiger Counter, 674; A Method of Recording Coincidences between Geiger Counters, 185  
 Jaeger (F. M.), Spatial Arrangements of Atomic Systems and Optical Activity; Methods, Results, and Problems of Precise Measurements at High Temperatures; The Constitution and Structure of Ultramarines, 852  
 Jaffray (J.), Some Properties of Thermocouples in a Vacuum, 1086  
 Jaggard (Prof. T. A.), The Work of the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, 1036  
 Jahn (C.), [W. R. Schoeller and], The Quantitative Separation of Titanium from Tantalum and Niobium, 845  
 James (Col. S. P.), W. D. Nicol, and P. G. Shute, The Prevention of Malarial Infection in Human Beings, 404  
 James (T. E.), Rumford and the Royal Institution: A Retrospect, 476  
 James (W. F.), [H. C. Cooke, J. B. Mawdsley, and], Pre-Cambrian Rocks of Quebec, 1006  
 Janssen (J.), Œuvres scientifiques. Recueillies et publiées par H. Dehérain. Tomes 1 et 2, 239  
 Janssens [E. Carrière and], Determination of Fluorine as Calcium Fluoride, 806  
 Japan (Emperor of), elected an Honorary Member of the Linnean Society of London, 793  
 Jayet (A.), and G. Amoudruz, The Discovery of Magdalenian Deposits near Frangy (Haute Savoie), 1087  
 Jeans (Sir James), Beyond the Milky Way, 592, 821, 825; The Annihilation of Matter, 100, 103; The Evolution of the Universe, 701; The Origin of the Solar System, 432; The Stars in their Courses, 615  
 Jeffreys (Dr. H.): Physics of the Earth, 984; Turbulence in a River, 1078  
 Jellinek (Prof. K.), Lehrbuch der physikalischen Chemie. Fünf Bände: Band 3: Die Lehre von der Statik chemischer Reaktionen in verdünnten Mischungen (Lösungen). Erste und zweite Auflage. Lief. 9, 852; Lief. 10 (Band 4). Erste und zweite Auflage, 958  
 Jenkins (Prof. G. L.), and Prof. A. G. Dumez, Quantitative Pharmaceutical Chemistry: containing Theory and Practice of Quantitative Analysis applied to Pharmacy, 958  
 Jenkins (H. G.), [N. L. Harris and], Discharge Tubes and their Technical Applications, 330  
 Jensen (H. L.), The Actinomycetales (1), 279; The Systematic Position of *Mycobacterium celiacum* Gray and Thornton, 280  
 Jevons (Prof. H. Stanley), The British Heavy Steel Industry, 678  
 Johnson (Lieut. G. R.), Peru from the Air. With Text and Notes by R. R. Platt, 172  
 Johnson (Dr. H. M.), Bodily Positions in Restful Sleep, 190  
 Johnston (H. L.), Prediction of Isotopes, 498  
 Jolibois (P.), and G. Chaudron, A New Method for getting Calcium Triphosphate in a Soluble Form, 315  
 Jones (D. G.), L. B. Pfeil, and W. T. Griffiths, Nickel-copper Alloys of High Elastic Limit, 502  
 Jones (Prof. F. Wood), The External Meatal Notch as a Primitive Character, 458  
 Jones (L. I.), Result of Interchange of Samples of Soils at Stations of different Altitudes, 668  
 Jones, Lewis, and Seaman, Flame Temperatures, 1081  
 Jones (Dr. Spencer), The Distance of Nova Pictoris, 121  
 Jones (Tudor), The Primitive Conducting Mechanisms of the Vertebrate Heart, 881  
 Jones (W. R. D.), The Copper-Magnesium Alloys (4), 595
- Joos (Prof. G.), Repetition of the Michelson-Morley Experiment, 729  
 Jordan (Prof. D. Starr), [death], 544; [obituary article], 788  
 Jorgensen (Prof. J.), A Treatise of Formal Logic: its Evolution and Main Branches. with its relations to Mathematics and Philosophy. 3 Vols., 1021  
 Joseph (Dr. A. F.), resignation from the Imperial Bureau of Soil Science, 220  
 Joshua (Dr. W. P.), [Dr. H. A. Auden and], Saccharification of Wood, 1045  
 Jouast (R.), and N. Stoyko, The Propagation of Short Radio-electric Waves, 82  
 Jouguet (E.), The Secular Stability of the Rotors of Turbines, 1049  
 Joukowsky (E.), A Levigator with a Motionless Liquid Medium, 734; The Phreatic Sheet of Soral (Canton of Geneva), 235  
 Julia (Prof. G.), [H. Beghin and], Exercices de mécanique. Tome 1, fasc. 2, 514
- Kablukov (I.), and F. Perelmann, The Heat of Combustion of certain Organic Halogenic Compounds, 127  
 Kailin (A.), and H. C. Hardt, The Velocity of Catalysed Hydrogenation, 467  
 Kann (Suzanne), [F. Chodat and], The Diurnal Course of Transpiration of two Alpine Plants, 126  
 Kaplan (Prof. J.), Excitation of the Green Auroral Line, 304; The Nature of the Aurora, 191  
 Karasinski (M.), Determination of Fluorine as CaF<sub>2</sub> according to the Method of Berzelius, 126  
 Kauffman (Prof. C. H.), [death], 143  
 Kay (G. F.), Duration of the Pleistocene Period, 586  
 Kaye (Dr. G. W. C.), New Physics Building at the National Physical Laboratory, 311; Noise and its Measurement, 251, 253  
 Kayser (Prof. H.), und Prof. H. Konen, Handbuch der Spektroskopie. Band 7, Lief. 2, 1061  
 Keane (Dr. C. A.), [death], 576; [obituary article], 752  
 Keble (R. A.), [W. J. Harris and], Victorian Graptolite Zones, with Correlations and Descriptions of New Species, 467  
 Keeler (Dr. C. E.), The Laboratory Mouse: its Origin, Heredity, and Culture, 431  
 Keen (Dr. B. A.), return to the Rothamsted Experimental Station, 998; The Physical Properties of the Soil, 391  
 Keilin (D.), elected Quick Professor of Biology in Cambridge University, 161; appointed Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, 916; [Dr. R. Lemberg, Prof. J. Barcroft, and], Uteroverdin, 967  
 Keith (Sir Arthur), Ethnos: or the Problem of Race considered from a New Point of View, 624; The Construction of Man's Family Tree, 590; The Place of Prejudice in Modern Civilisation (Prejudice and Politics), 473  
 Keller (F.), [Prof. A. Güntherschulze and], Cathode Phenomena in the Glow Discharge, 840  
 Kemp (A. R.), Paragutta, 218  
 Kendall (J.), [Dr. D. Kostoff and], Tetraploid and Triploid Petunias, 227  
 Kendrick (T. D.), A late La Tène Spear-head from the Thames, 586  
 Kennard (E. H.), Quantum Mechanical Motion of Free Electrons in Electromagnetic Fields, 83  
 Kennelly (Prof. A. E.), The Convention of Equidimensional Electric and Magnetic Units, 164; The Modern Electric Age in relation to Faraday's Discovery of Electromagnetic Induction, 356  
 Kenner (Prof. J.), An Aspect of Co-ordination, 1000  
 Kermack (W. O.), and W. H. McCrea, An Operational Method for the Solution of Linear Partial Differential Equations, 882  
 Kerner-Marilaun (Dr. F.), Paläoklimatologie, 1025  
 Kerr (P. F.), [C. S. Ross and], Kaolin Minerals, 875  
 Kerrich (G. J.), appointed Junior Curator of the Cambridge University Museum of Zoology, 161  
 Kershaw (S.), Worst Open Drawing, 1060  
 Kessler (Mlle. B.), [G. Foëx and], The various Magnetic States of the Nickel Ion in Solutions of its Chloride, 315



- Keestelman (H.), awarded the Sir George Jessel Studentship in Mathematics in London University, 161
- Ketelaar (J. A. A.), Structure of the Trifluorides of Aluminium, Iron, Cobalt, Rhodium, and Palladium, 303, 440
- Keyston (J. E.), [Dr. H. Schuler and], Hyperfine Structure of Thallium II., 409; Changes of Intensity in the Hyperfine Structure of Lines, 911
- Kharasch and Isbell, Organic Gold Compounds, 415
- Kichuchi (Kenzo), Polymorphic Characters in Rotifers influenced by Feeding, 227
- Kiess (Dr. and Mrs.), The Arc Spectrum of Zirconium, 228
- Kimball (G. E.), and J. R. Bates, The Band Spectrum of AsH., 969
- King (C. D.), [W. M. Marston, Elizabeth H. Marston, and], Integrative Psychology: a Study of Unit Response, 1025
- King (Prof. E. S.), [death], 863
- King and Jacobs, The Oxidation of Iodide by Persulphate, 121
- Kingman (Dr. F. E. T.), The Critical Increment of the Adsorption of Hydrogen on Amorphous Carbon at 400°-520° C., 272
- Kipp (P. J.), and Zonen, A New Type of Ammeter, 183
- Kirkby and Wheeler, Explosions in Closed Cylinders, 729
- Kirkpatrick (Sir Cyril), The Tidal Thames, 789
- Kitakami (Sirô), *Blepharoceridæ* of Japan, 640
- Kitasato (Baron), [obituary article], 142
- van der Klaauw (Dr.), The Auditory Region in certain Extinct Mammals, 910
- Kling (A.), and D. Florentin, The Mode of Action of Dehydrating Catalysts in the Hydrogenating Cracking of Phenols, 1050
- Knight (J. F. H.), bequest to London University, 80
- Koch (S.), [Dr. O. E. Frivold and], The Magneto-electric Saturation Effect, 675
- Kofoed (Prof. C. A.), Japanese Dinoflagellates, 154
- Kohlrausch (Prof. K. W. F.), Der Smekal-Raman-Effekt, 1026; The Raman Effect, 155
- Kollath (R.), [C. Ramsauer, D. Lilienthal, and], Collision Properties of Protons, 911
- Koller (Dr. O.), Mammals of an Island Group (Pityusa), 414
- Komai (T.), and Y. M. Tung, Anal Gland of *Squilla*, 762
- Koncevich (V.), [A. Frank-Kamenetskii and], The Chemical Composition of the Water of the Hot Springs in Northern Transbaikalia, 422
- Konen (Prof. H.), [Prof. H. Kayser und], Handbuch der Spektroskopie. Band 7, Lief. 2, 1061
- Kopaczewski (W.), Traité de biocolloïdologie. Tome 1: Pratique des colloïdes. Deux. édition. Fasc. 3: Mesures capillaires et électriques, 852
- Korsakova (M. P.): Mechanism of the Reduction of Nitrates (3), 387; and E. Nikitina, Influence of the Associated Bacteria in the Nitrogen Régime of *Granulobacter pectinovorum*, 387
- Korvezee (Mlle. A.), [Mlle. C. Chamié and], The Centrifugation of Solutions of Polonium in the Presence of various Electrolytes, 82
- Kostoff (Dr. D.), and J. Kendall, Tetraploid and Triploid Petunias, 227
- Kostychev (S. P.), V. Gvaladze, and P. S. Eliasberg, The Formation of Pyruvic Acid in Lactic Fermentation, 127
- Kothari (D. S.), [R. C. Majumdar and], The Relativistic Opacity Coefficient, 908
- Kracek (F. C.), S. B. Hendricks, and Dr. E. Posnjak, Group Rotation in Solid Ammonium and Calcium Nitrates, 410
- Kramer (Mlle. A.), [M. Bridel and], The Constitution of Asebotoside (Asebotine): its Identity with Phlorizoside (Phlorizine), 978
- Kreiken (Dr. E. A.), Stellar Rotation, 308
- Krieger (C. J.), Elements of the Trojan Planet Æneas, 764
- Krishnamurti (P.), Raman Spectra of Liquid Mixtures, 639
- Kronig (Prof. R. de L.), and S. Frisch, Nuclear Moments, 228
- Krüger (P.), and F. Färlinger, Histology and Chemistry of Tetanus and Tonus Substratum, 468
- Kruyt (Prof. H. R.), translated by Prof. H. S. van Klooster. Colloids: a Textbook. Second edition, 852
- Kryloff (Prof. N. M.), Les méthodes de solution approchée des problèmes de la physique mathématique, 963; Angenäherte und symbolische Lösung der Differentialgleichungen der mathematischen Physik und Technik, 963
- Krylov (A.), The Loss of Airships *R38*, *R101*, and others, 683
- Kühn (O.), [E. Dittler and], The Genesis of Bauxite in the Upper Sann Valley, 867
- Kukarkin (B. W.), The Variability of Betelgeux, 764
- Kunitomi (S. I.), The Idu (Japan) Earthquake of Nov. 26, 1930, 552
- Kurbatov (S.), The Pyrophyllite from the Tehistaya-Gora Deposits in the Southern Ural, 770
- Kurnakow (N. S.), and N. W. Ageew, Physico-chemical Study of the Gold-Copper Solid Solutions, 554
- L. (W. W.), Matter: Life: Mind, 906
- Labarthe (A.), [L. and A. Seguin], An Apparatus for the Study of the Phenomena of Injection and of Combustion in Motors by the Ultra-cinematograph, 421
- Lacaille (A. D.), The Cult of the Bull in Scotland, 874
- Lackenby (H.), awarded the Elgar Scholarship of the Institution of Naval Architects, 420
- Lacroix (A.), The Recent (June 27, 1931) Fall of an Asiderite Meteorite in the extreme south of Tunis, 646; The Tectites of Indo-China, 386; The Tectites of the Philippines, 554
- Lacroute (P.), [L. and E. Bloch, F. Esclangon, and], Observation of the Zeeman Effect with High Frequency, 386
- Ladame (G.), The Central Rhodopes and the Balkans, 83
- Laemmlein (G.), The Regular Formation of Twins in Porphyro-quartz of Samshvildo, 387
- Lafferty (H. A.), [M. J. Gorman and], On a Method of distinguishing the Seedlings of Swedish Turnip (*Brassica napus* L. var. *napobrassica* (L.) Reichb.) from those of Broad-leaved Rape (*Brassica napus* L. var. *biennis* (Schubl et Mart) Reichb.), 162
- Laforgue (P.), Prehistory of West Africa, 839
- Laidlay (J. C.), Breeding from Colour Varieties, 379
- Laignel-Lavastine (Prof. M.), The Concentric Method in the Diagnosis of Psychoneurotics, 690
- Laing (late Andrew), institution of an Annual Lecture in memory of, 670
- Lal (Rai Bahadur Hira), Indian Place-names, 839
- Lamb (Dr. C. G.), reappointed Reader in Electrical Engineering in Cambridge University, 916
- Lamb (Dr. F. W.), An Introduction to Human Experimental Physiology, 475
- Lambrey (M.), A Method of Studying the Decomposition of Gun-cottons at the Ordinary Temperature, 1050
- de Lana (Francesco Terzi), tercentenary of the birth of, 993
- Lanchester's Laboratories, Ltd., The Loud Speakers of, 669
- Lander (Dr. C. H.), Oil and Petrol from Coal, 900
- Lander (Dr. G. D.), [Prof. R. M. Caven and], Systematic Inorganic Chemistry: from the Standpoint of the Periodic Law. New edition, 209
- Landolt (Hans Heinrich), Centenary of the Birth of, 899
- Lang (Dr. H. R.), appointed Secretary of the Institute of Physics and editor of the *Journal of Scientific Instruments*, 1036
- Lang (Prof. W. H.), awarded a Royal Medal of the Royal Society, 821; presented with a Royal Medal of the Royal Society, 973
- Langdon (Prof. S. H.), elected a Corresponding Member of the Field Museum of Natural History, 756
- Lange (F.), [A. Brasch and], Utilisation of Atmospheric Electric Fields, 380
- Langseth (Dr. A.), Fine Structure of Raman Lines in Liquids, 225
- Lantz (R.), and G. Mingasson, The Naphthalene Bisulphite Compounds, 315
- Lapicque (C.), [P. Auger and], Variation in the Spectrum of the Sensibility of Cuprous Oxide Cells, 646
- Lapworth (Prof. A.), awarded the Davy Medal of the Royal Society, 821; presented with the Davy Medal of the Royal Society, 973
- Larke (E. C.), [M. Cook and], Physical Testing of Copper and Copper-rich Alloys in the form of Thin Strip, 554



- Lauffenburger (R.), [L. Hackspill and], Action of Heat on the Alkaline Diacid Phosphates, 682
- Lautsch [Prof. Paneth and], Isolation of the Radical Ethyl, 1007
- Lawrence (E. O.), and D. H. Sloan, Production of High-speed Canal Rays without the use of High Voltages, 83
- Lea (A. M.), On *Baridiinae* (Curculionidae), mostly from New Guinea, 279
- Leake (Dr. H. Martin), Plea for the establishment of Biology as a Profession, 666
- Leakey (Dr. L. S. B.): The Marriage of Kikuyu Girls, Kenya, 696; The Stone Age Cultures of Kenya Colony. With Appendices by J. D. Solomon, C. E. P. Brooks, A. T. Hopwood, H. C. Beck, and M. Connolly, 1019; A. T. Hopwood, and Prof. H. Reck: Age of the Oldoway Bone Beds, Tanganyika Territory, 724; New Yields from the Oldoway Bone Beds, Tanganyika Territory, 1075
- Leavenworth (Prof. F. P.), Measures of Double Stars, with the Measures by Prof. W. O. Beal, 743
- Lebard (P.), [J. Costantin, J. Magrou, and], Influence of a Period in the Mountains on the Productivity of the Potato, 1086
- Lebedeff (Dr. A. A.), A Focusing Method for producing Electron Diffraction Patterns, 491
- Lebreton (Mlle. E.), and F. Moco-roa, The Number and Nature of the Proteolytic Ferments of the Pancreatic Juice, 199
- Le Breton (E.), F. Moco-roa, and E. Stulz, The Proteolytic Ferments of the Intestinal Juice and of the Pancreatic Juice, 422
- Le Brocq (L. F.), [H. Sutton and], Protection of Magnesium Alloys against Corrosion, 502
- Le Camus (C.), and F. de Saint-Just, Magnetic and Electrical Observations in the Sahara, 882
- Lecoin (M.), [Mme. Irene and], A New Gaseous Compound of Polonium, 199
- Le Corbeiller (P.), [B. Decaux and], A Self-maintained Electrical System utilising a Neon Tube, 978
- Lee (L. L.), Soil Classification, 677
- Leech (H.), appointed Experimental Engineer at University College, Southampton, 681
- Leeman (A. C.), The Antimony Electrode as a Means for *pH* Measurements, 682
- Lees (S.), appointed Professor of Mechanical Engineering in the University of Birmingham, 278
- Le Fèvre and Webb, Molecular Weight Determinations, 38
- Le Grain (R.), [C. Baron, C. Boulanger, and], Petrol-alcohol-benzene Mixtures, 163
- Leitz (E.), A New Illumination Device for Microscopy, 1010
- Lemaître (Abbé G.), The Evolution of the Universe, 704
- Lemarchands (M.), and H. L. Roman, Action of Anhydrides upon Metals, 163
- Lemberg (Dr. R.), Prof. J. Barcroft, and Dr. D. Keilin, Uteroverdin, 967
- Lenher, Oxidation of Ethylene, 912
- Lennard-Jones (Prof. J. E.), The Nature of Cohesion, 462, 763
- Lepape (A.), [M. Curie and], The Thermal Conductivity of the Rare Gases, 1050
- Leppard (L. B.), [Prof. J. C. McLennan, M. F. Crawford, and], Nuclear Moments of the Isotopes of Lead: Relative Values of the *g(I)* Factors of Pb(207) and Tl, 301
- Lespagnol (A.), [M. Polonovski and], Two New Sugars from Human Milk, Gyrolactose and Allolactose, 125
- Lespieau (R.): M. Bourguel, and R. L. Wakeman, The Raman Effect in Chemistry, 503; and R. L. Wakeman, The Preparation of the Trimethylene Hydrocarbons, 235
- Leulier (A.), and Mme. A. Roche, The Mechanism of the Antiglycosuric Action of Santonine, 422
- Levaditi (C.), J. Bardet, A. Tchakirian, and A. Vaisman, The Distribution of Gallium in the Organism, 466
- Levine (Prof. M.), and H. W. Schoenlein, A Compilation of Culture Media for the Cultivation of Micro-organisms, 244
- Lévy (A.), [G. Darzens and], The Direct Bromination of Metacresol, 555
- Lévy (G.),  $\beta$ -ethylnaphthalene and its Hydrogenation Products, 163
- Levy (R.), An Introduction to the Sociology of Islam, Vol. 1, 951
- Lewis (C. M.), [W. V. Houston and], Rotational Raman Spectrum of CO<sub>2</sub>, 280
- Lewis (Prof. G. N.), Generalised Thermodynamics, 498
- Lewis (Prof. H. F.), Fundamentals of Organic Chemistry, 957
- Lewis [Jones, Seaman, and], Flame Temperatures, 1081
- Lewis (W. B.), [Lord Rutherford, F. A. B. Ward, and], Long-Range  $\alpha$ -Particles, 37
- Leyshon (W. A.), The Jumping Negative Glow, 795
- Liapounov, A. M., 1857-1918, A. J. Pressland, 138
- Lighthall (Dr. W. D.), Matter: Life: Mind, 907
- Lilienstern (Marie), A Liverwort as Pioneer on Burnt Forest Land, 37
- Lilienthal (D.), [C. Ramsauer, R. Kollath, and], Collision Properties of Protons, 911
- Linder (E. G.), The Dissociation of Water, 799
- Lindsay (Prof. R. B.), [Prof. G. W. Stewart and], Acoustics: a Text on Theory and Applications, 779
- Ling (Prof. A. R.), Plant Biochemistry, 621
- Linhorst (E. F.), [J. H. Hodges and], The Thermal Decomposition of Nitrogen Pentoxide, 83
- von Lippmann (Prof. E. O.): Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Alchemie. Band 2: Ein Lese- und Nachschlage-Buch, 774; Lucian and Condensed Air by Compression, 666
- Litchko (E.), Regeneration of the Extremities in the Axolotl under the Influence of X-rays, 127
- Lloyd (Dr. Ll.), Disappearance of Insect-borne Diseases from Britain, 798
- Lloyd (Prof. F. E.), and Prof. G. W. Scarth, An Elementary Course in General Physiology. Part 2: Laboratory Exercises, 563
- Lockhart (R. D.), appointed Professor of Anatomy in Birmingham University, 80
- Lockyer (Dr. W. J. S.): Changes of the Corona in the Sunspot Cycle, 229; Forms of the Solar Corona and their Origin, 784
- Lodge (Sir Oliver): A Retrospect of Wireless Communication, 591; Advancing Science: being Personal Reminiscences of the British Association in the Nineteenth Century, 982; Communications, 932; The Evolution of the Universe, 722
- Loewinson-Lessing (F.), V. Mitkevitch, and A. Turcev, Experiments in the Artificial Magnetisation of Limonites, 127
- Löfquist (H.), [Dr. C. Benedicks and], Non-metallic Inclusions in Iron and Steel, 856
- Lombardini (M.), Geometric Considerations for Periodal Analysis, 1050
- Long (Prof. J.), [death], 666
- Longo (P.), [A. Puppo and], The Storm of July 24, 1930, in the Treviso-Udine District, 466
- Longwell (Prof. C. R.), Outlines of Physical Geology, 513
- Loomis (A. L.), Improvement in Time-recording, 38
- Lord (Lieut.-Col. J. R.), [death], 404
- Lorentz (Prof. H. A.), Lectures on Theoretical Physics delivered at the University of Leiden. Translated by Dr. L. Silberstein and A. P. H. Trivelli. Vol. 3: Maxwell's Theory, edited by Dr. H. Bremekamp; The Principle of Relativity for Uniform Translations, edited by Dr. A. D. Fokker, 959
- Lo Surdo (A.), Thermionic Valves with Fall of Potential across the Grid, 734
- Lot (F.), Bretons et Anglais aux V<sup>e</sup> et VI<sup>e</sup> siècles, 61
- Louis (Prof. H.), Sir Hugh Bell, Bt., 96
- Loukianoff (G.), An Archaic Egyptian Figurine, 640
- Loveday (A.), Britain and World Trade: Quo Vadimus and other Economic Essays, 955
- Lowater (Miss F.), The Band Spectrum of Zirconium Oxide, 917
- Lowe (C. van Riet), Giant Crescents: a New Stone Age Industry from South Africa, 36
- Lowndes (A. G.), *Eurytemora thompsoni*, A. Willey: a New European Record, 967
- Ludlam (Dr. E. B.), Band Spectrum of the Green Flame of Phosphorus, 271
- Lugard (Lord), Africa in Transition, 730



- Luguer (Col. T. T. P.), Mason and Dixon's Line, 995  
 Lukes (R.), Action of Grignard's Reagent on *N*-Methyl Pyrrolidin, 127  
 Lumbroso (U.), [C. Nicolle and], The *Bacterium granulosa* of Noguchi in its Relations with the Etiology of Trachoma, 81  
 Lumière (A.), and A. Seyewetz, Preparation of Fine Grain Negative Images by Development, 1086  
 Lundegårdh (Prof. H.), translated and edited by E. Ashby, Environment and Plant Development. Being "Klima und Boden in ihrer Wirkung auf das Pflanzenleben," 135  
 Lyman (Prof. T.), awarded the Frederick Ives Medal of the Optical Society of America, 834  
 Lynch (A.), Brain and Mind, 954
- Maby (J. C.), Identification of Wood and Wood Charcoal Fragments, 733  
 McBain (Prof. J. W.): Periodic Precipitation in the Absence of Colloids, 1042; and Du Bois, Electrokinetics and the Interpretation of Surface Conductivity, 677  
 Maebeth (Prof. A. K.), Organic Chemistry for Medical, Intermediate Science, and Pharmaceutical Students. Second edition, 657  
 MacBride (Prof. E. W.), Death and Development, 382  
 McCabe (Prof. W. L.), [Prof. W. L. Badger and], Elements of Chemical Engineering, 622  
 McCale (C. H.), The Utilisation and Conservation of Indian Coal, 219  
 McCann (D. C.), [H. S. Olcott and], Cause of the Transformation of Carotene into Vitamin A., 998  
 McClean (Capt. W. N.), River Flow Records, 867  
 McClintock (Barbara), [Harriet B. Creighton and], A Correlation of Cytological and Genetical Crossing-over in *Zea mays*, 1014  
 McClintock (Dr. M.), Street Traffic Engineering, 1033  
 McCrea (G. W.), An X-Ray Examination of *a*-Mannitol and *d*-Mannose, 882  
 McCrea (W. H.), [W. O. Kermack and], An Operational Method for the Solution of Linear Partial Differential Equations, 882  
 McDonald (Dr. E.), Cancer Research and the Scientific Method, 407  
 MacDonald (J.), Forest Gardens, 915  
 Macdonald (Prof. R.), The Form of Faecal Pellets and Specific Identification, 68  
 McElvain [Snell and], Aceto-acetic Ester Condensation, 229  
 Macfadyen (Dr. W. A.), Tertiary Foraminifera, 1080  
 Macfie (Dr. R. C.), [obituary article], 179  
 MacGregor (Dr. M. E.), Ultra-Violet Rays and Mosquito Larvæ, 68  
 McGuinness (Annie), [T. Dillon and], On Alginic Acid: its Mode of Occurrence and its Constitution, 162  
 McInerny (A. J.), Deserts and the Birth of Civilizations, 475  
 McKay (A. T.), Diffusion for the Infinite Plane Sheet, 733  
 Mackaye (Prof. J.), The Dynamic Universe, 288  
 Mackenzie (Prof. J. S.), Cosmic Problems: an Essay on Speculative Philosophy, 628  
 McKerrow (J. C.), Novius Organum: Essays in a New Metaphysic, 562  
 Macky (Dr. W. A.), Liquid Drops in Electric Fields, 799  
 McLachlan (Dr. N. W.), Inertia of Loud-Speaker Vibrating Diaphragm, 641; Modern Apparatus for the Reproduction of Speech and Music, 517; On the Effective Mass of Flexible Discs and Conical Diaphragms used for Sound Reproduction, 733  
 McLennan (Prof. J. C.): Superconductivity a Polarisation Phenomena, 373; A. C. Burton, A. Pitt, and J. O. Wilhelm, Superconductivity at High Frequencies, 1004; M. F. Crawford, and L. B. Leppard, Nuclear Moments of the Isotopes of Lead: Relative Values of the *g(I)* Factors of Pb(207) and Tl, 301  
 Macnair (Major J. L. P.), Branching of Lightning, 969  
 McNeil (Dr. C.), appointed Clark Professor of Child Life and Health in Edinburgh University, 197  
 Macrae (Major A. E.), Overstrain of Metals: and its application to the Auto-Fretage Process of Cylinder and Gun Construction, 49  
 Macrae (Dr. T. F.), appointed a Research Student in Biochemistry at the Lister Institute, 197
- Madeira (P. C.), Exploration of Yucatan by Aeroplane, 866  
 Madigan (C. T.), The Macdonnell Ranges, 1006  
 Magnan (A.), [E. Huguenard and], An Ultra-rapid Cinematograph giving from 2000 to 3000 Images per Second, 163  
 Magnusson (N. H.), Långbans malmträkt geologisk beskrivning, 384  
 Magrou (J.): [L. Binet and], Sulphur and Growth, 466; [J. Constantin, P. Lebard, and], Influence of a Period in the Mountains on the Production of the Potato, 1086  
 Mahajan (Prof. L. D.), Effect of Light on the Surface Tension of Boys's Soap Solutions, 496  
 Mailhe (A.), and Creusot, The Transformation of Benzene into Methane, 422; The Transformation of Toluene and of Xylene into Methane, 466  
 Majorana (Q.), Certain New Facts ascertainable by means of Ordinary Photoelectric Cells, 734; New Photoelectric Investigations, 646  
 Majumdar (R. C.), and D. S. Kothari, The Relativistic Opacity Coefficient, 908  
 Malan (D.), The Absorption Spectrum of Oxygen at High Temperatures, 386  
 Malaprada and Schnoutka, The Separation and Estimation of Boric Acid and Alumina, 315  
 Malherbe (Prof. I. de V.), The Aims and Objects of Soil Science, 801  
 Malloch (J. R.), Australian Diptera, 595, 918  
 Malone (J. F. J.), A New Prime Mover, 80  
 Mann (G. E.), [Dr. H. A. Tempany and], Principles of Tropical Agriculture, 954  
 Mann (L. MacLellan), Find of alleged Pre-Chellean Implements at Stanstead, Surrey, 144  
 Mann (W. B.), and B. G. Dickens, The Thermal Conductivities of Saturated Hydrocarbons in the Gaseous State, 881  
 Marboux (G.), An Electrical Oscillator of Low Frequency Stabilised by a Tuning Fork, 42  
 Mardles (Dr. E.), The Peroxidation of Hydrocarbons during Combustion in Air, 116; The Slow Combustion of Methane and Ethane, 304  
 Margary (I. D.), [J. E. Clark, R. Marshall, Capt. C. J. P. Cave, and L. C. W. Bonacina, Phenological Observations in the British Isles from Dec. 1929 to Nov. 1930, 917  
 de Margerie (Dr. E.), elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Society, 64  
 Marie (C.), and N. Marinesco, The Volume Contraction produced by the Hydration of Proteins, 978; and N. Thon, The Phenomena of Expansion presented by certain Electrolytic Deposits of Metals, 421  
 Marie (Dr. C.), Annual Tables of Constants and Numerical Data for Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and Technology, 662  
 Marinesco (N.), The Electromotive Force of Filtration produced by the Ascent of the Sap in Plants, 422; [C. Marie and], The Volume Contraction produced by the Hydration of Proteins, 978  
 Marlatt (Dr. C. L.), Report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 612  
 Maroger (J.), The Reconstitution of the Painting Technique of Jean Van Eyck, 978  
 Marples (G.), Ringed Plover and its Eggs, 154  
 Marrack (J. R.), and F. Campbell Smith, The Study of Specific Combination in Immunity Reactions, 1077  
 Marrian (Dr. G. F.), and A. Butenandt, (Estrus-producing Hormones, 305  
 Marsh (Othniel Charles), Centenary of the Birth of, 696  
 Marshall (Sir Guy), Weevils of Samoa, 676  
 Marshall (R.), [J. E. Clark, I. D. Margary, Capt. C. J. P. Cave, L. C. W. Bonacina, and], Phenological Observations in the British Isles from Dec. 1929 to Nov. 1930, 917  
 Marston (Elizabeth H.), [W. M. Marston, C. D. King, and], Integrative Psychology: a Study of Unit Response, 1025  
 Marston (W. M.), C. D. King, and Elizabeth H. Marston, Integrative Psychology: a Study of Unit Response, 1025  
 Martin (Dr. A. R.), Polarity and Vapour Pressure, 456  
 Martin (Dr. G.), The Modern Soap and Detergent Industry. Second edition. 2 Vols., 625



- Martin (Prof. L. C.), Some Recent Developments in Microscopy, 833
- Marvin (Prof. F. S.), A New Summary of Knowledge, 937; Paul Tannery and the History of Science, 613; Soviet Science, 170
- Maskell (Dr. E. J.), appointed University Lecturer in Plant Physiology in Cambridge University, 844
- Massey (H. S. W.), [E. C. Bullard and], Diffraction of Electrons, 799
- Masson (Prof. I.), Melting Points of Nitrobenzene and of Benzene, 726; Problems in the National Teaching of Science (Pedler Lecture), 753
- Massy (Miss Anne L.), [obituary article], 59
- Mathias (E.): The Usefulness of Long Periods of Observation of the Rainfall in a given Place, 918; and G. Grénet, The Electric Field at the Summit of the Puy de Dôme, 806
- Matignon (C.), Commercial Nitrates of Lime, 646
- Matout (L.), [J. Becquerel and], The Decomposition of the Absorption Bands of Xenotime by a Transverse Magnetic Field, 466
- Matthews (R. B.), Electricity for Everybody: Handbook for 1931, 960; New Agricultural Devices in Germany, 297
- Matuyama (E.), [J. Okubo and], The Forbidden Lines in the High Frequency Discharge of Mercury, Cadmium, and Zinc, 224
- Mauclère (P.), [P. Carré and], The Chloride of Acid Ethyl Sulphite and the Neutral Mixed Alkyl Sulphites, 386
- Maulik (S.), [A. J. Engel Terzi and], Dr. L. W. Sambon, 486
- Mawdsley (J. B.), [H. C. Cooke, W. F. James, and], Pre-Cambrian Rocks of Quebec, 1006
- Mayer (Prof. F.), Advances in the Dye-stuff Industry, 792
- Mazur (Dr. J.): Change of Density of Carbon Disulphide with Temperature, 673; Change of the Dielectric Constant of Carbon Disulphide with Temperature, 761; [Prof. M. Wolfke and], Change of Dielectric Polarisation of Carbon Disulphide with Temperature, 871; [Prof. M. Wolfke and], Change of Dielectric Polarisation of Nitrobenzene with Temperature, 584
- Mead (Dr. Margaret), Social Organisation in Manoa, 414
- Medical Supply Association, Ltd., Catalogue of X-Ray Apparatus and Appliances, 112
- Medvedev (J.), The Kinetics of the Alcoholic Fermentation, 163
- Meek (C. K.), A Sudanese Kingdom: an Ethnographical Study of the Jukun-speaking Peoples of Nigeria, 285; Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria. Vol. 1, 285
- Meggitt (Prof. F. J.), Insectivorous Snakes, 413
- Mellanby (Prof. E.), appointed a Member of the Medical Research Council, 184
- Meller (H. B.), Air Pollution at Pittsburgh, 307
- Mellor (Dr. J. W.), A Comprehensive Treatise on Inorganic and Theoretical Chemistry. Vol. 11, 957
- Melotte (P. J.), Star Density in different Galactic Latitudes, 192
- Melvin (E. H.), [O. R. Wulf, and], Ultra-Violet Spectrum of Ozone, 763
- Menzbier (M. A.), The Combination of Factors to which the Origin and the Development of Terrestrial Vertebrates is due, 127
- Menzies (Dr. R. C.), A Two-Dimensional Space Lattice? 907
- Mercier (F.), Influence of Dextrorotatory Pseudo-cocaine on the Hypertensive Action of Adrenaline, 1050
- Merriam (Dr. C. Hart), awarded the Roosevelt medal, 147
- Metz (C. W.), and M. Louise Schmuck, Differences between Chromosome Groups of Soma and Germ-line in *Sciara*, 423
- Meyer (Dr. A. R.), elected President of the International Illumination Congress, 1934, 643
- Meyer (J.), [J. Saidman, R. Cahen and], The Local Effects in the Rat due to Electric Fields of very High Frequency, 387
- Meyer (Mrs. Kirstine), Faraday and Ørsted, 337
- Mezzadrolì (G.), and E. Vareton, Action of Ultra-short Electromagnetic Waves (2-3 Metres), on Amylase, 46
- Miall (Dr. S.), A History of the British Chemical Industry, 43
- Michal (K.), Oscillation in Oxygen Consumption during the Day and during the whole Life of Invertebrates, 1013; Relation between the Population Density and the Optimum for Life, and of this to the Sex Ratio, in some Invertebrates, 1013
- Michel-Lévy (A.), and H. Muraour, The Temperature of Deflagration of Colloidal (explosive) Powders, 421
- Middleton (A. D.), The Vole Cycle in Britain, 36
- Miers (Sir Henry), Address to the Museums Association, 330
- Miller (A. A.), Climatology, 514
- Miller (A. H.), Incubation of the Mexican Jacana, 306; Song of an American Oriole, 970; The Impaling Instinct of Shrikes, 1005
- Miller (Prof. E. C.), Plant Physiology: with reference to the Green Plant, 952
- Millikan (Prof. R. A.), The Evolution of the Universe, 709; and Dr. I. S. Bowen, Similarity between Cosmic Rays and Gamma Rays, 582
- Milne (Prof. E. A.), Collapsed Stars and Novæ, 587; The Evolution of the Universe, 715; The Internal Temperature of White Dwarf Stars, 999
- Milne-Thomson (Prof. L. M.), Two Books of Logarithms, 91
- Mingasson (G.), [R. Lantz and], The Naphthalene Bisulphite Compounds, 315
- Mitchell (Sir Peter Chalmers), Life and Matter, 723; "The World List of Scientific Periodicals", 70; Zoos and National Parks, 578
- Mitkevitch (V.), [F. Loewinson-Lessing, A. Turcev and], Experiments in the Artificial Magnetisation of Limonites, 127
- Mitkewich (W. T.), Faraday and Electrical Science in Russia and the U.S.S.R., 359
- Mitra (Birendrakumar), [Prof. Ekenranath Ghosh and], Anterior Abdominal Vein in the Toad, 273
- Mnich (E.), The Phosphorus Compounds of Plants (6), 279
- Mocoroa (F.), [E. Le Breton, E. Stulz, and], The Proteolytic Ferments of the Intestinal Juice and of the Pancreatic Juice, 422; [Mlle. E. Lebreton and], The Number and Nature of the Proteolytic Ferments of the Pancreatic Juice, 199
- Moffett (A. A.), Chromosomes and Constitution, 875
- Moggridge (J. Y.), [J. Phillip, J. D. Scott, and], Photochemical Measurements of Light Intensity in two common Vegetation Types in Tropical Africa, 162
- Moir (J. Reid), Palæolithic Flint Implements, 767; The Oldoway Human Skeleton, 797
- Moissan (Henri), A Monument to, 679
- Mori (Yasumasa), Transformation of Scales in Gold Fish, 119
- Moles (Prof. E.), The Atomic Weight of Fluorine, 966
- Mollison (J. A.), record flight from Australia to England, 266
- Montessus de Ballore (Dr. R. de), Probabilités et statistiques, 286
- Montgomery (Dr. G. L.), appointed Lecturer in Clinical Pathology in St. Andrews University, 81
- Mooney (R. B.), and H. G. Reid, The Absorption Spectra of Cyanogen and the Cyanogen Halides, 882; Ultra-Violet Absorption Spectra of Cyanogen and the Cyanogen Halides, 271
- Moore (R. B.), [F. J. Allen and], Krypton and Xenon, 380
- Moreux (Abbé), Meteoric Hypothesis for the Origin of the Solar System, 729
- Morgan (Prof. G. T.): Jubilee Celebrations of the Society of Chemical Industry, 226; and Dr. S. Sugden, Paramagnetism of Bivalent Silver, 31; and R. Taylor, Syntheses of Ethyl Alcohol, 38; and Pettet, Identification of Hydroxylic Compounds, 37
- Morris (Ann Axtell), [E. H. Morris, J. Charlot, and], The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itzá, Yucatan, 694
- Morris (E. H.), [J. Charlot, and Ann Axtell Morris], The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itzá, Yucatan, 694
- Morris (Sir William R.), gift to the British Empire Cancer Campaign, 440
- Morris-Owen (R. M.), Esperanto in Scientific Literature, 969
- Morshead (Lieut.-Col. H. T.), [obituary article], 58
- Mortensen (Prof. T.), The Development and Larval Forms of Echinoderms, I-II., 417
- Mott (N. F.), Polarisation of a Beam of Electrons by Scattering, 454
- Mottern [Nelson and], Organic Acids in Plants, 415
- de Moubray (G. A. de C.), Matriarchy in the Malay Peninsula and Neighbouring Countries, 624
- Mougnaud (P.), The Estimation of Fluorine, 386



- Moullin (E. B.), The Theory and Practice of Radio Frequency Measurements: a Handbook for the Laboratory and a Textbook for Advanced Students. Second edition, 1057
- Mowdawalla (F. N.), appointed Professor of Electrical Technology in the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, 197
- Moynihah of Leeds (Lord), address at the laying of the corner stone of the Wellcome Research Institution, 974; re-elected president of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, 101
- Muir (M. M. Pattison), [death], 437
- Muirhead (Prof. J. H.), Prof. A. S. Pringle-Pattison, 575
- Mukherjee (Prof. J. N.), and S. P. Roychoudhury, Hydrolytic Adsorption of Activated Charcoal, 412
- Mullen (A. W.), The Strange Acquirement of a Central Australian Parrot, the Corella, 579
- Müller (Prof. E.), translated by Dr. H. J. T. Ellingham, A Laboratory Manual of Electrochemistry, 743
- Munch (J. C.), and J. Silver, The Pharmacology of Thallium and its use in Rodent Control, 383
- Muraour (H.), [A. Michel-Lévy], The Temperature of Deflagration of Colloidal (explosive) Powders, 421
- Murphy (Dr. A. J.), Constitution of the Alloys of Silver and Mercury, 554, 1082
- Murphy (P.), Armadas of the Sky: the Problem of Armaments, 963
- Murray (D. G.), [E. S. Simpson and], A New Siderotite from Bencubbin, Western Australia, 977
- Musya (K.), Luminous Phenomena accompanying Earthquakes, 155
- Muybridge (Eadweard), the work of, 143
- Myers (Dr. C. S.), On the Nature of Mind, 537, 744
- Myers (Dr. J. G.), The Biological Control of West Indian Insect Pests, 878
- Myers (O. H.), Cult of the Sacred Bull in Ancient Egypt, 119
- Myres (Prof. J. L.), Topography and Tradition, 938
- Nadson (G.): and G. Burgwitz, Yeasts from the North Polar Ocean, 682; and G. Filippov, The Formation of New Stable Races of Micro-organisms under the Influence of X-Rays, (2) 422, (3) 467; and E. A. Stern, Action of the Ultra-Violet and X-Rays on the Yeast Cell, 467; The Combined Action of Metals and of X-Rays on Yeasts, 503
- Nagaoka (Prof. H.), Propagation of Electromagnetic Waves, 120
- Nagata (Masani), awarded the Donohoe Comet medal of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 868
- Nakamura (Prof. Gisaburo), Isotope Effect in the Band Spectrum of Lithium Hydride, 759
- Nakashima (Hirokichi), Tree Growth and Weather, 840
- Namba (S.), Abnormality of Radio Signals passing through High Latitudes, 1044
- Nanjundayya (the late H. V.), and Rao Bahadur L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, The Mysore Tribes and Castes. Vol. 3, 50
- Nansen (Dr. F.), translated by G. C. Wheeler, Through the Caucasus to the Volga, 319
- Narayan (Dr. A. L.), First Structure in the Arc Spectra of Indium and Thallium, 675
- Narlikar (V. V.), elected an Isaac Newton Student in Cambridge University, 804
- Nasonov (N.), On *Acerorhynchus baicalensis* Rubtsoff (Turbellaria, Rhabdocœla) from Lake Baikal, 127
- Nathan (Dr. M.), L'esprit et ses maladies, 6
- Needham (Dr. J.), Excretion of Uric Acid, 152
- Negretti and Zambra: Catalogue of Meteorological Instruments, 670; Distance Thermometers, 972
- Nelson and Mottern, Organic Acids in Plants, 415
- Nenadkevich (K.), An Electro-colorimetric Method for the Determination of Small Quantities of Manganese, 770
- Netter (R.), [O. Bailly and], The Isolation of Carotene from the suprarenal glands, 1086
- Neumann (M.), and A. Serbinoff, Limits of Gaseous Explosions, 1040
- Newnham (E. V.), Measurement of Pressure and Temperature in the Upper Atmosphere, 878
- Newson (J. E.), and A. Wragg, The Failure of High-strength Brass, 503
- Newton (Sir Isaac), room dedicated to the memory of, at Coimbra University, 930
- Newton and Anderson, Respiration of Wheat at Low Temperature, 970
- Newton (R.), and W. R. Brown, Frost Injury to Plants, 911; Respiration of Wheat at Low Temperature, 970
- Ney (Mlle. M.), Enlargement of Diffused Lines without Change of Frequency in the Raman Effect, 126
- Nicholls (J. R.), Jenkins and DuMez's Quantitative Pharmaceutical Chemistry, 958
- Nicholls (K.), awarded a Woolmen Company medal, 757
- Nicloux (M.), Combustion of Alcohol by the Pœcilothersm, 682
- Nicod (J.), translated by P. P. Wiener, Foundations of Geometry and Induction, 430
- Nicol (H.), Distribution of Agar-liquefying Bacteria, 1041
- Nicol (W. D.), [Col. S. P. James, P. G. Shute, and], The Prevention of Malarial Infection in Human Beings, 404
- Nicolle (C.), and U. Lumbroso, The *Bacterium granulosa* of Noguchi in its relations with the Etiology of Trachoma, 81
- Nierenstein (Dr. M.), Constitution of Cyanidin Chloride, 587; Gallnuts as a Chemical Reagent, 1006
- Nightingale (E.), Magnetism and Electricity, 959
- Nikitina (E.), [M. Korsakova and], Influence of the Associated Bacteria on the Nitrogen Régime of *Granulobacter pectinovorum*, 387
- Noble (L. F.), Nitrate Deposits of California, 155
- Noel (E.), [obituary article], 100
- Noguera (E.), Pottery of Ancient Mexico, 459
- Nolan (Prof. J. J.), and Dr. P. J. Nolan, Atmospheric Ionisation, 971
- Nolan (Dr. P. J.), [Prof. J. J. Nolan and], Atmospheric Ionisation, 971
- Noonan (N.), [Prof. J. Reilly, P. J. Drumm, and], The Evaluation of the Menthone Content of Peppermint Oil, 845
- Norman (Ivy Evelyn), and P. J. Smith, Leather Crafts Manual, 1060
- Normand (Dr. C. W. B.), Graphical Indication of Humidity in the Upper Air, 583
- du Noiÿ (Dr. P. Lecomte), Effect of Light on the Surface Tension of Boys's Soap Solution, 674
- Novotny (F.), and F. Toul, The Estimation of Traces of Elementary Oxygen, 1013
- Nunn (Sir T. Percy), Prof. H. Wildon Carr, 98
- Nygaard (G.), Freshwater Algae and Phytoplankton from the Transvaal, 316
- Oakley (Dr. R. A.), [death], 486
- Odell (N. E.), Oxygen and Everest, 1037
- O'Donoghue (Dr. C. H.), Abnormalities of the Vascular System of the Anura, 42
- Offord (J. M.), Recollections of the Quekett Microscopical Club, 29
- Okhlopko (E.), Certain Problems on the Limits of the Theory of Logarithmic Potential, 43
- Okubo (J.), and E. Matuyama, The Forbidden Lines in the High Frequency Discharge of Mercury, Cadmium, and Zinc, 224
- Olcott (H. S.), and D. C. McCann, Cause of the Transformation of Carotene into Vitamin A, 998
- Oliver (D. A.), Subjective Interpretation of Loudspeaker Frequency Response Curves in Terms of Loudness, 268
- O'Neill (H.), The Diameter Measurement of Certain Brinall Indentations in Cold-rolled Metal, 595; and J. W. Cuthbertson, The Work-hardening Capacity and Elongation Properties of Copper, 595
- Onslow (Hon. Mrs. M. W.), Chemical Effect of a Mendelian Factor for Flower Colour, 373; The Principles of Plant Biochemistry. Part 1, 621
- Orlov (J.), The Remains of a Primitive Representative of Pinnipedia from the Neogene Deposits in Western Siberia, 503
- Orrok (Dr. G. A.), The Pearl Street Electric Power Station, New York, 140
- Orton (Prof. J. H.): and C. Amirthalingam, Sex-change in the Oyster, 273; and S. T. Burfield, Biological Effects of Cosmic and  $\gamma$ -Radiation, 376



- Osborn (Prof. H. F.), conferment upon, of an honorary doctorate by Paris University, 936; edited by Florence Milligan, Fifty-two Years of Research, Observation, and Publication, 1877-1920: a Life Adventure in Breadth and Depth, 625; The Principles of Evolution revealed by Palaeontology, 894
- Osborn (T. G. B.), J. G. Wood, and T. B. Paltridge, The Autecology of *Stipa nitida*: a Study of a Fodder Grass in Arid Australia, 918
- Osborne (Prof. W. A.), Conservation of Rainfall as Carbohydrates, 378
- Oswald (Dr. F.), Index of Potters' Stamps on Terra Sigillata "Samian Ware". With a Supplement, 951
- Paillard (H.), [E. Briner, A. Demolis, and], The Ozonation of Aldehydes and the Theory of Active Molecules, 235
- Painton (E. T.), The Steel-cored Aluminium Cable, 1070
- Pallu (R.), [R. Dubrisay and], The Photochemical Oxidation of Sulphur, 646
- Paltridge (T. B.), [T. G. B. Osborn, J. G. Wood, and], The Autecology of *Stipa nitida*: a Study of a Fodder Grass in Arid Australia, 918
- Paneth (Prof. F.), translated by Dr. R. W. Lawson, The German Bunsen Society in Vienna, 94; and Lautsch, Isolation of the Radical Ethyl, 1007
- Pant (B. D.), [H. G. Champion and], Seeds and Seedlings of Sál, 1080
- Papish (Dr. J.), Identification of the Element of Atomic No. 87 in Samarskite, 696; and Wainer, The Discovery of Element No. 87, 789
- Paréjas (E.), Results of the Harvard University Geological Expedition in the Canadian Rockies, 1929 (3), 235
- Parker (Dr. H. L.), Polyembryony in a Braconid Parasite, 190
- Parmenter (C. E.), S. N. Trevino, and C. A. Bevans, Articulation of Isolated Sounds, 380
- Parrod (J.), and Mlle. Y. Garreau, The Oxidation Products of *D*-Mannose by Ammoniacal Copper Oxide in the Presence of Air, 1050
- Parsons (Sir John H.), Young's Theory of Colour Vision, 123
- Partington (Prof. J. R.), Alchemical Apparatus, 118; Chinese Alchemy, 1074
- Paterson (C. C.), The British Standard Specification for Street Lighting, 488
- Patterson (H. S.): Prof. R. Whytlaw-Gray, and W. Cawood, The Atomic Weight of Fluorine, 375; [W. Cawood and], A Curious Phenomenon shown by Highly-charged Aerosols, 150
- Payman [Grimshaw and], Ignition of Fire-damp by Coal-mining Explosives, 867
- Payne (Cecilia H.), The Stars of High Luminosity, 615
- Payne (R. J. M.), [J. L. Haughton and], Transformations in the Gold-Copper Alloys, etc., 554
- Peacock (Prof. A. D.), Problems in Parthenogenesis, 941
- Peacock (M. A.), [G. W. Tyrrell and], The Petrology of Iceland, 881
- Peake (H. J. E.), Age of Certain Gravels in the New Forest Area, 378
- Pear (Prof. T. H.), Voice and Personality, 657
- Pearce (T. J. P.), [Prof. M. W. Travers, L. E. Hockin, and], Influence of Hydrogen on Chemical Changes in Silica Vessels, 66
- Pearl (Prof. R.), Psychology and Organised Religion, 1047; The Operations of the Bureau for Contraceptive Advice, 180
- Pearn (Dr. O. P. N.), Mental Nursing (Simplified), 892
- Pearsall (Pilling and), Nitrogen Content of Apples in Storage, 549
- Pearson (H.), Erasmus Darwin, 1731-1802, 1032
- Pearson (Dr. J.), False Killer Whales in Ceylon Waters, 839
- Pearson (R. S.), and others, Research in Wood Preservation, 1083
- Peddie (Prof. W.), Modern Views on Magnetism, 623
- Pedersen (Dr. K. O.), Temperature Stability and Denaturation of Serum Albumin, 150
- Peek (B.), Rapid Current on Jupiter, 192
- Peers (Sir Charles), Address to the Annual Congress of Archaeological Societies, 900
- Peltier (J.), Search for Want of Symmetry and Faults in Ferromagnetic Test Pieces, 733
- Péneau (H.), [Mlle. D. van Stolk, J. Guilbert, H. Simonnet, and], Pure Carotene and Vitamin A, 199; [Mlle. D. van Stolk, J. Guilbert, and], Carotene and Vitamin A, 467
- Penrose, Jr. (Prof. R. A. F.), [death], 666
- Pentelov (F. T. K.), A New Locality for *Gammarus chevreuxi* Sexton, 797
- Perelmann (F.), [I. Kablukov and], The Heat of Combustion of Certain Organic Halogenic Compounds, 127
- Perier (A. L.), The Maxillofacial Correlations, 734
- Perkin (D.), [A. Archangelskii and], Origin of the Ferrous Deposits in the Lipetsk Area, 163
- Perkins (E. B.), and T. Snook, Control of Pigment Migration in the Chromatophores of Crustaceans, 423
- Perkins (Jacob), The Work of, 1070
- Perkins (Dr. M.), Acromegaly in the Far North, 491; Light of Glow-worms, 905
- Perotti (R.), The Struggle of Cereals against *Stretta*, 735
- Perret (A.), and R. Perrot, The Hydrolysis of Nitrosyl Chloride and of Nitrogen Peroxide by Caustic Potash, 1086
- Perrot (R.), [A. Perret and], The Hydrolysis of Nitrosyl Chloride and of Nitrogen Peroxide by Caustic Potash, 1086
- Perry (Prof. R. B.), A Defence of Philosophy, 964
- Petch (T.), Entomogenous Fungi, 874
- Petri (L.), A Method for detecting the Exceptional Presence of Mercury in Vegetable Tissues, 647
- Petrie (Sir Flinders), Experiments in Prophylaxis, 35
- Pettet [Morgan and], Identification of Hydroxylic Compounds, 37
- Pfeil (L. B.), [D. G. Jones, W. T. Griffiths, and], Nickel-Copper Alloys of High Elastic Limit, 502
- Phelan (Prof. J. W.), [Prof. A. A. Blanchard and], Synthetic Inorganic Chemistry: a Course of Laboratory and Classroom Study for First Year College Students. Fourth edition, 92
- Phillip (J.), J. D. Scott, and J. Y. Moggridge, Photochemical Measurements of Light Intensity in Two Common Vegetation Types in Tropical Africa, 162
- Phillips (A. C.), [Sir Gilbert Walker and], The Forms of Stratified Clouds: Part 1, Experimental; Part 2, Discussion, 917
- Phillips (Dr. F. C.), appointed University Lecturer in Petrology in Cambridge University, 1048; On Crystals of Brookite Tabular Parallel to the Basal Plane, 977
- Philp (Dr. J.), and Prof. C. L. Huskins, A Satellite missing from Ever-sporting Stocks, 970
- Philpot (J. St. L.), [F. A. Askew, Miss H. M. Bruce, Dr. R. K. Callow, T. A. Webster, and], Crystalline Vitamin D, 758
- Piccard (A.), E. Stahel, and F. Dony, The Absorption of the penetrating Gamma Rays by Lean Screens 12-30 cm. thick, 846
- Pickard (J. N.), and Prof. F. A. E. Crew, The Scientific Aspects of Rabbit Breeding, 512
- Picon and Cogné, Study of some Sulphides of the Rare Earths, 882
- Piggot (C. S.), Radium in Hawaiian Lavas, 840
- Pilling and Pearsall, Nitrogen Content of Apples in Storage, 549
- Pirrone (Dr. F.), Acceleration of Fermentation by Algæ and Sea-water, 419; [L. Sanzo and], Irradiation of Sea Water by Ultra-Violet Rays and its Action on the Velocity of Alcoholic Fermentation of Glucose Solutions, 806
- Pitt (A.), [Prof. J. C. McLennan, A. C. Burton, J. O. Wilhelm, and], Superconductivity at High Frequencies, 1004
- Pitt (W. J.), A Dwarf Chamaeleon with Two Litters, 407
- Pittard (J. J.), The Bitumen of the Urgonian Limestone and the Molasse of Pyrimont (Ain), 734
- Pizón (S.), [K. Dziewonski and], A New Method of Synthesis of Dinaphthopyrone, 279
- Placzek (Dr. G.), Evidence for the Spin of the Photon from Light-Scattering, 410
- Planck (Prof. Max), Positivismus und reale Aussenwelt, 289



- Plaskett (Prof. H. H.), appointed Savilian professor of astronomy in Oxford University, 930
- Plowe (Janet), [Prof. W. Seifriz and], Extensibility of Protoplasm, 1045
- Pochin (E. E.), elected Michael Foster Research Student in Physiology in Cambridge University, 161
- Pohl (Prof. R. W.), translated by Winifred M. Deans, Physical Principles of Electricity and Magnetism, 134
- Pokrowski (Prof. G. I.), An Effect of X-Rays on Matter, 875
- Polack, Which Colours do all Colour-blind People fail to distinguish? 1050
- Polonovski (M.): and A. Lespagnol, Two New Sugars from Human Milk, Gyrolactose and Allolactose, 125; and R. Hazard, Some Physiological Effects of Chlorotropane, 734
- Pons (Jean Louis), Centenary of the Death of, 610
- du Pont de Nemours (E. I.), Artificial Rubber, 1044
- Poole (Dr. T.), A New Method of Identification, 904
- Popova-Wassina (E. T.), A Vigorous Naked Sheep, 866
- Popovitch-Schneider (Mme. V.), Extension of Hele-Shaw's Method to Cyclic Movements, 386
- Porcherel (A.), [C. Fromageot and], The Action of Pancreatin upon Different Types of Wool, 1013
- Porter (Prof. J. T.), [death], 666
- Posnjak (Dr. E.), [F. C. Kracek, S. B. Hendricks, and], Group Rotation in Solid Ammonium and Calcium Nitrates, 410
- Posnjak [Ross, Henderson, and], A New Uranium Mineral, 155
- Post and Gatty, Flight round the Earth, 60
- Powell (Prof. H. C.), The Culture of the Orange and Allied Fruits, 955
- Power (J. H.), On the Herpetological Fauna of the Lobatsi-Linokana Area, 126
- Pratesi (P.), Reactions of Addition to Unsaturated Organic Compounds, 1050; [M. Betti and], Optical Resolution of Racemic Aldehydes (2), 1014
- Pratje (O.), Helgoland und die Zerstörung seiner Felsküste durch das Meer, 657
- Prausnitz (Dr. P. H.) und Dr. J. Reitstötter, Elektrophorese, Elektroosmose, Elektrodialyse in Flüssigkeiten, 988
- Prelog (V.), The Sapogenin of Beetroot, 127
- Pressland (A. J.), A. M. Liapounov, 1857-1918, 138
- Preston (J. M.), Anisotropy due to Flow in Cellulose Sols, 796
- Prettre (M.), Ignition of Mixtures of Acetaldehyde and Air, 503
- Prianishnikov (D.), and V. V. Butkevitch, The Physiological Characteristics of Potassium Salts, 163
- Price (J. A.), awarded the Earl of Durham Prize of the Institution of Naval Architects, 420
- Pringle-Pattison (Prof. A. S.), [death], 437; [obituary article], 575
- Procter (Dr. Joan B.), [death], 544; [obituary article], 664
- Prost (M.), [M. Curie and], The Radiation accompanying the Hydration of Quinine Sulphate, 386
- Pruthi (Dr. Hem Singh), Effects of Inadequate Feeding on Insect Metamorphosis, 869
- Pryde (J.), and R. T. Williams, The Pyranoid Structure of Glucuronic Acid and of Theophylline Arabinoside, 187
- Przibram (Prof. K.), Faraday and Austria, 351
- Pugh (W.), Influence of Fluoride Ions upon the Reduction of Potassium Permanganate (1), 682
- Pulvertaft (R. J. V.), appointed University Reader in Pathology in London University, 805
- Pumphrey (R. J.), appointed University Demonstrator in Zoology in Cambridge University, 880
- Pupin (Prof. M. I.), awarded the John Fritz gold medal, 868
- Puppo (A.), The Storm of July 24, 1930, in the Treviso-Udine District, 199; and P. Longo, 466
- Puri (Dev Raj), Mimicry in Indian Butterflies, 459
- Purser (G. L.), The Early Stages of Development of the Vertebrates, 42
- Putnoký (Dr. F.), [Dr. N. Goldstern and], Illumination in Factories, 1080
- Quére (H.), The Oxidation of the Alcohols by the Acetic Ferments, considered as a Form of Cell Respiration, 770
- Quilico (A.), and M. Freri, Azopyrrole Blacks (3), 595
- Quintin (Mlle. M.), The Activity Coefficient of the Bivalent Copper Ion in Solutions of its Sulphate, 1050
- Rabaté (J.), [C. Charaux and], The Biochemical Study of the Genus *Salix*, 199
- Radoslavoff (B. M.), Earthquakes and Mineral Springs, 677
- Rafałowski (S.), Structure of the Raman Band of Water, 546; The Fine Structure of Spectral Lines of Light scattered by Liquids, 495; The Raman Bands in Water, 978
- Raitt (W.), The Digestion of Grasses and Bamboo for Paper-Making, 949
- Rakshit (Jitendra Nath), Association Theory of Solution and Inadequacy of Dissociation Theory, 852
- Ramage (H.), and J. H. Sheldon, Mineral Content of Eyes, 376
- Raman (Sir C. V.): Atoms and Molecules as Fitzgerald Oscillators, 795; Doppler Effect in Light-Scattering, 636; India's Debt to Faraday, 362; The Angular Momentum of Light, 545; and S. Bhagavantam, Evidence for the Spin of the Photon from Light-Scattering, 114; Experimental Demonstration of Spin of Light, 576; Spin of Light Quanta, 727; and S. W. Chinchalkar, A New Type of Magnetic Birefringence, 758
- Ramdas (Dr. L. A.), and L. P. Venkiteswaran, Spectrum of Glow-worm, 726
- Ramsauer (C.), R. Kollath, and D. Lilienthal, Collision Properties of Protons, 911
- Ramsbottom (J.), Forestry Research in Great Britain, 118
- Ramsey (A. S.), Hamilton's 'Characteristic Function', 167
- Ramsey (F. P.), edited by R. B. Braithwaite, The Foundations of Mathematics: and other Logical Essays, 620
- Rao (Prof. Basur Sanjiva), and M. R. Aswathnarayana Rao, Reaction between Hydrogen Sulphide and Sulphur Dioxide, 413
- Rao (Dr. K. R.), and J. S. Badami, Resonance Spectrum of Hydrogen, 585; The Structure of the Spectrum Se III, 496
- Rao (Prof. L. Rama), Occurrence of *Lithothamnion* in the South Indian Cretaceous, 225, 873
- Rao (M. R. Aswathnarayana), [Prof. Basur Sanjiva Rao and], Reaction between Hydrogen Sulphide and Sulphur Dioxide, 413
- Rao (S. Ramachandra): Diamagnetism and the Colloidal State, 153; and G. Sivaramakrishnan, Diamagnetism of Liquid Mixtures, 872
- Rashleigh (E. C.), The Guayra Falls of the Parana, 549
- Rasmussen (E.), and H. Swenson, Intensity Anomalies in Rare Gas Spectra, 188
- Ratcliffe (F. N.), The Flying Fox in Australia, 122
- Ratner (A.), [V. Chlopin and], Distribution of a Dissolved Substance between the Crystalline and the Fluid Phase, 387
- Ray (B. B.), [Dr. A. K. Das, D. N. Dasgupta, and], Measurement of Pressure and Temperature in the Upper Atmosphere, 878
- Ray (Dr. B. B.), and B. B. Datta, Part-Absorption in X-Rays, 224
- Rây (Sir P. C.), Synthesis of Ethyl Thio-aceto-acetate, 189
- Rayleigh (Lord), Mercury Line Spectrum in Fluorescence, 905; The Mercury Band Spectrum in Fluorescence, 724
- Rayner (Dr. M. C.), Mycorrhiza in Relation to Forestry, 1011
- Read (Prof. Carveth), [obituary article], 1067
- Read (Prof. J.), A Chinese Alchemist, 509; An Introduction to Organic Chemistry, 742; Chemistry through the Ages, 321; Essential Oils (Bedson Lecture), 864
- Reck (Prof. H.), [Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, A. T. Hopwood, and], Age of the Oldoway Bone Beds, Tanganyika Territory, 724; [Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, A. T. Hopwood, and], New Yields from the Oldoway Bone Beds, Tanganyika Territory, 1075
- Redman (R. O.), elected a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, 768



- Redshaw (L.), awarded the Vickers-Armstrong scholarship of the Institution of Naval Architects, 768
- Reichel (Sir Harry R.), [death], 179
- Reid (H. G.), [R. B. Mooney and], The Absorption Spectra of Cyanogen and the Cyanogen Halides, 882; [R. B. Mooney and], Ultra-Violet Absorption Spectra of Cyanogen and the Cyanogen Halides, 271
- Reid (W. F.), [death], 930
- Reidemeister (Prof. K.), Vorlesungen über Grundlagen der Geometrie, 626
- Reilly (Prof. J.), Review of Recent Advances in Analytical Chemistry, vol. 1, 208; B. Daly, and P. J. Drumm, Diazotisation of Aminophenylpyrazoles, 162; M. Hayes, and P. J. Drumm, Lichenin, 162; N. Noonan, and P. J. Drumm, The Evaluation of the Menthone Content of Peppermint Oil, 845
- Reinach (S.), Orpheus: a History of Religions. Revised and partly rewritten. Translated by Florence Simmonds, 628
- Reisner (Dr. G. A.), Ancient Egyptian Sealings, 1079
- Reitstötter (Dr. J.), [Dr. P. H. Prausnitz und], Elektro-phorese, Elektrosmose, Elektrodialyse in Flüssigkeiten, 988
- Renaud (Dr. E. B.), Central Wyoming Pictographs, 910; Colorado and Folsom Points, 190
- Rendle (Dr. A. B.), Dr. Richard Wettstein, 436
- Rendle (B. J.), Timber of the British Douglas Fir, 971
- Rennet (Miss Nita), [Sir J. Arthur Thomson and], Antarctic Aleyonaria, Madreporaria, and Antipatharia, 71
- Restaino (S.), [F. Zambonini and], Praseodymium and Thallous Sulphates, 1014
- Reymond (F.), and Tcheng da tehng, The Separation of Polonium and of Protactinium fixed on Tantalum Oxide, 386
- Reyner (J. H.), Modern Radio Communication. Third edition, 1057
- Reynolds (J. H.), The Hakemite Tables of Ebn Jounis, 913
- Reynolds (Miss T. M.), [J. C. Earl and], The Celluloses of Two Water Plants, 316
- Reynolds (W. C.), Charged Aerosols and Ball Lightning, 584
- Ricardo (H. R.), The High-Speed Internal-Combustion Engine. New edition, 886
- Rice (D. Talbot), [Dr. L. H. Dudley Buxton and], Human Remains from Kish, 798
- Rice (F. O.), and H. T. Byck, Collision between Organic Molecules and Surfaces, 228
- Rice (O. K.), On the Transfer of Energy between Atoms at Collision, 83
- Rich (F.), Phytoplankton from South African Pans and Vleis, 316
- Richards (D.), appointed a Tutor for Adult Education in Birmingham University, 80
- Richards (P. W.), awarded a Frank Smart prize of Cambridge University, 80
- Richardson (Prof. O. W.), Isolated Quantised Magnetic Poles, 582
- Richey (J. E.), and others, The Geology of Ardnamurchan, North-west Mull and Coll, 619
- Richmond (Dr. Droop), [death], 437
- Richter (G. H.), [W. D. Bancroft and], Reversible Coagulation in Living Tissue (3), 423; [W. D. Bancroft and], Reversible Coagulation in Living Tissue (4), 846
- Rideal (Prof. E. K.), Treatise on Physical Chemistry, 429
- Riétý (L.), and G. Salager, An Electromotive Force of Filtration of Abnormal Value, 1050
- van Rijn (Dr. J. F. L.), Die Glykoside: Chemische Monographie der Pflanzenglykoside. Zweite auflage von Prof. H. Dieterle, 959
- Riley (N. D.), The Comma Butterfly in England, 760
- Rimer (G.), [D. Epstein, J. W. C. Gunn, E. Epstein, and], The Adrenal Secretion of *Xenopus levis*, 126
- Rinck (E.), Diagram of Solidification of the Calcium-Sodium Alloys, 163
- Rindl (M.), The Alkaloids of the Bark of *Strychnos henningsii*, 200
- Ritchie (Prof. J.), Science and Philosophy of Life, 1056
- Rivard (Adjutor), awarded the Lorne Pierce medal of the Royal Society of Canada, 275
- Rivera (V.), Factors exciting Increase of Vegetal Neoplasms by *B. tumefaciens*, 806
- Roberti (G.), Hydrogenation of the Nitrogen Compounds contained in Primary Tar, 735
- Roberts (E.), and W. E. Carroll, Mexican Hairless Swine, 866
- Roberts, Jr. (F. H. H.), Pit-Dwellings at Kiatuthlanna, Eastern Arizona, 154
- Roberts (J. E.), [Prof. R. Whiddington and], Electron Exchange Phenomena in the Excited Atom, 966
- Robertson (A.), Application of the Simonis Reaction to Monohydric Phenols, 908
- Robertson (Sir Robert), and B. A. Ellis, Faraday's "Chemical Manipulation", 371
- Robinson (G. M.), and Prof. R. Robinson, Constitution of Anthocyanins, 413
- Robinson (H.), [S. C. Blacktin and], Electrification of Coal Dust, 498
- Robinson (Prof. R.), [G. M. Robinson and], Constitution of Anthocyanins, 413
- Robinson and others, Synthesis of Anthocyanins, 912
- Robinson [Briscoe, Stoddart, and], Rhenium Compounds, 192, 729
- Robson (A.), [C. V. Durell and], Advanced Trigonometry, 92
- Roche (Mme. A.), [A. Leulier and], The Mechanism of the Antiglycosuric Action of Santonine, 422
- Roche (J.), and A. Bendrihem, The Combination of Globin with Hæmatins of Various Origins, 646
- Rodger (Sir Alexander), Forestry in the Empire, 833
- Rodolico (F.), Diopside and Tremolite from Monte Spinosa in the Campigliese, 1014
- Rolle (H. G.), presented with the Pereira Medal of the Pharmaceutical Society, 667
- Rollefson and Booher, Photochemical Decomposition of Hydrogen Iodide, 72
- Rolleston (Dr. J. D.), A Legend concerning Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, 996
- Rollier (Dr.), La Clinique—Manufacture Internationale, 1072
- Roman (H. L.), [M. Lemarchands and], Action of Anhydrides upon Metals, 163
- Rosa (Prof. D.), L'Ologénese: nouvelle théorie de l'évolution et de la distribution géographique des êtres vivants, 429
- Rose (D. C.), Tests of Combinations of Lighting Units, 1034
- Rosenberg (Prof. O.), elected an honorary fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, 834
- Rosenblum (S.), The Long Path  $\alpha$ -Rays emitted by  $\text{ThC}+\text{C}'$  and some Determinations of the Velocities of the  $\alpha$ -rays, 1050
- Rosenhain (Dr. W.), elected president of the New International Association for Testing Materials, 1935, 644
- Rosenholtz, (Dr. J. L.), The Elements of Ferrous Metallurgy, 626
- Rosewood (A.), Disasters at the Moon's Third Quarter, 997
- Ross (C. S.), and P. F. Kerr, Kaolin Minerals, 875
- Ross, Henderson, and Posnjak, A New Uranium Mineral, 155
- Rosseland (Prof. S.), Astrophysik auf atomtheoretischer Grundlage, 615
- van Rossem (A. J.), Land Birds of Sonora, Mexico, 190
- Rossi (Prof. B.), Absorption and Diffusion of the Penetrating Corpuscular Radiation in Lead and Iron, 806; Magnetic Experiments on the Cosmic Rays, 300; Measurements on the Absorption of the Penetrating Corpuscular Rays coming from Inclined Directions, 408
- Rossier (P.), An Astrophysical Formula; the Calculation of the Apparent Diameter of a Star, 734; Nature of Purkinje's Phenomenon, 235
- Rossini (F. D.), The Heat of Combustion of Methyl Alcohol, 555
- Roulleau (J.), [R. Audubert and], The Rôle of the Phenomena of Photoconductance in the Photovoltaic Effect, 555
- Roux (A.), [L. Guillet, J. Cournot and], The Influence of Occluded Gases on the Mechanical Properties of Metallurgical Products, 978
- Rowe (C. H.), A Characteristic Property of Systems of Paths, 1086
- Rowell (P. F.), title of Honorary Member of the Société Française des Électriciens conferred upon, 834



- Rowland (Rev. J. P.), The North Sea Earthquake of June 7, 15, 147
- Rowntree (S.), Some Industrial Problems of To-day, 331
- Roychoudhury (S. P.), [Prof. J. N. Mukherjee and], Hydrolytic Adsorption of Activated Charcoal, 412
- Rumbold (G.), The Origin of Life. Second Impression, 243
- Rupp (H. M. R.), The Orchids of the South Maitland Coalfields, with description of a new *Dendrobium* from Bullahdelah, 279
- Ruse (H. S.), On the Definition of Spatial Distance in General Relativity, 882
- Russell (A.), British Mineral Collectors and Dealers in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries, 42
- Russell (Sir John), The Changing Outlook in Agriculture, 539, 1027
- Russell (Dr. W. K.), Ultra-Violet Radiotherapy, 953
- Rutgers (J. J.), Modification of Pregl's Method for Determining Nitrogen, 421
- Rutherford (Lord), conferment upon, of an honorary degree by the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, 756, 833; Helium and its Properties, 137; and Dr. C. D. Ellis, Origin of  $\gamma$ -rays, 415, 805; F. A. B. Ward, and W. B. Lewis, Long-Range  $\alpha$ -Particles, 37
- Rutherford (Sir Ernest) [Lord], Dr. J. Chadwick, and Dr. C. D. Ellis, Radiations from Radioactive Substances, 3
- Rutzler, jr. (J. E.), [W. D. Bancroft and], Reversible Coagulation in Living Tissue, 280, 1014
- Rybicka (Mme. M.), [W. Swietolawski, Mme. W. Solodkowska, and], An Adiabatic Microcalorimeter, 126
- Rydberg (Dr. P. A.), [death], 437
- Saegusa (Prof. H.), and S. Shimizu, Anomalous Variation of the Electrical Conductivity of Quartz with Temperature at the Transformation Point, 835
- Saha (Prof. M. N.), and Y. Bhargava, The Spin of the Photon, 870
- Saidman (J.): The Comparative Biological Properties of High Frequency and Very High Frequency Currents, 1013; J. Meyer, and R. Cahen, The Local Effects in the Rat due to Electric Fields of very High Frequency, 387
- Saini (H.), and J. Weigl, A possible Transformation of Maleic Acid into Fumaric Acid, 235
- de Saint-Just (F.), [C. Le Camus and], Magnetic and Electrical Observations in the Sahara, 882
- de Saint-Périer (Dr. R.), La Grotte d'Isturitz. 1: Le Magdalénien de la Salle de Saint-Martin, 988
- Salager (G.), [L. Riéty and], An Electromotive Force of Filtration of Abnormal Value, 1050
- Salceanu (C.), The Natural and Magnetic Rotary Polarisation of some Organic Compounds Studied in the Liquid State, 82
- Saller (Dr. K.), Leitfaden der Anthropologie, 624
- Salmon (Dr. E. H.), Materials and Structures: a Text-book for Engineering Students, Vol. 1: The Elasticity and Strength of Materials, 617
- Sambon (Dr. L. W.), [death], 437; [obituary article], 486
- Sampson (Dr. J.), [death], 863; [obituary article], 898
- Sampson (Prof. R. A.), elected President of the Philosophical Society of the University of Durham, 723
- Samuel (G.), and J. G. Bald, *Thrips tabaci* as a Vector of Plant Virus Disease, 494
- Samuel (Sir Herbert), acceptance of the Presidency of the British Institute of Philosophy, 64
- Samuel (Dr. R.), Absorption Spectra of Complex Salts, 729
- Sandford (Dr. K. S.), and Dr. W. J. Arkell, Palæolithic Man and the Nile-Faiyum Divide; a Study of the Region during Pliocene and Pleistocene Times, 287
- Sandström (A.), Multiple Ionisation and Secondary X-Ray Absorption Edges, 759
- Sanfourche (A.), The Electrometric Titration of Phosphoric Acid, 82
- Sanzo (L.), and F. Pirrone, Irradiation of Sea Water by Ultra-Violet Rays and its Action on the Velocity of Alcoholic Fermentation of Glucose Solutions, 806
- Sapir (Dr. E.), Shoshonean Linguistics, 379
- Satoh (Shun-ichi), Atomic Hydrogen occluded in Iron Nitride, 457
- Saunders (A. R.), Maize in South Africa, 1060
- Saunders (Prof. F. A.), A Survey of Physics for College Students, 134; A Survey of Physics, 628
- Saunders (T. R. B.), reappointed Demonstrator in Engineering in Cambridge University, 916
- Savage (R. E.), Distribution of Herring and Plankton, 1079
- Say (Dr. M. G.), award to, of the Coopers Hill War Memorial Prize and Medal, 1072
- Scarborough (Prof. J. B.), Numerical Mathematical Analysis, 962
- Scarth (Prof. G. W.), An Elementary Course in General Physiology. Part 1: Principles and Theory, 563; [Prof. F. E. Lloyd and], An Elementary Course in General Physiology. Part 2: Laboratory Exercise, 563
- Ščegoleva-Barovskaja (T.), New Mordellidæ (Coleoptera) in the Collections of the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences, 387
- Schaafsma (Dr. A.), Bands in the Spectrum of Barium Hydride, 1042
- Schaefer (Prof. C.), Gauss's Investigations on Electrodynamics, 339
- Schaffer (Prof. F. X.), Lehrbuch der Geologie. Teil 3. Lief. 1, 956
- Schally (E.), The Observation of Streaks in Chemical Studies: (4) D-streaks and Allied Phenomena, 468
- Schedler (A.), and M. Toperczer, The Distribution of Declination in Austria at the Epoch 1930-0, 43
- Scheele, Carl Wilhelm, The Collected Papers of, Translated by Dr. L. Dobbin, 1023
- Schidlof (A.), Application of Wave Mechanics to Nuclear Physics, 734
- Schmidt (C. F.), [K. K. Chen and], Ephedrine and related Substances, 629
- Schmidt (Prof. J.), Eels and Conger Eels of the North Atlantic, 602
- Schmuck (N. Louise), [C. W. Metz and], Differences between Chromosome Groups of Soma and Germ-line in *Sciara*, 423
- Schneiderhöhn (Prof. H.), und Prof. P. Ramdohr, Lehrbuch der Erzmikroskopie; Erzmikroskopische Bestimmungstafeln: Anhang zum Lehrbuch der Erzmikroskopie, 889
- Schnoutka [Malaprade and], The Separation and Estimation of Boric Acid and Alumina, 315
- Schoeller (W. R.), and C. Jahn, The Quantitative Preparation of Titanium from Tantalum and Niobium, 845; [E. F. Waterhouse and], The Separation of the Earth Acids from Metals of the Hydrogen Sulphide Group, 845
- Schoenlein (H. W.), [Prof. M. Levine and], A Compilation of Culture Media for the Cultivation of Micro-organisms, 244
- Schofield (J. F.), The Occupation of Great Zimbabwe, 791
- Schonland (Dr. B. F. J.), Lightning Phenomena, 799; and Dr. T. E. Allibone, Branching of Lightning, 794; and C. A. Coppins, Point Discharge Measurements below Thunderstorms, 200
- Schopfer (W. H.), Influence of Yeast Extracts and Concentrates of B Vitamins on the Sexuality of a Fungus, 734
- Schuchert (Prof. C.), Building of the Northern Appalachians, 227; Outlines of Historical Geology. Second edition, 513
- Schüler (Dr. H.), and J. E. Keyston, Changes of Intensity in the Hyperfine Structure of Lines, 911
- Schultz (Prof. A. H.), Man and the Primates, 1043
- Schultz (Dr. F.), Estimation of Bromine in Organic Compounds, 72
- Schultz [Sturtevant and], A Hypothesis of 'Sub-genes', 273
- Schulze (Dr. W. M. H.), Short Wave Reception and Ultra-Radiation, 837
- Schuster (Sir Arthur), awarded the Copley Medal of the Royal Society, 821; presented with the Copley Medal of the Royal Society, 973
- Schuster (G.), [J. Bougault and], Composition of Karité Butter, 682
- Schütz (W.), [Dr. E. Bergmann and], Structure of the Azides, 1077
- v. Schwarz (Dr. M.), Microscopic Examination of Metals by Polarised Light, 800



- Scott (Prof. Charlotte A.), [death], 863
- Scott (J. D.), [J. Phillip, J. Y. Moggridge, and], Photochemical Measurements of Light Intensity in two common Vegetation Types in Tropical Africa, 162
- Scrase (F. J.), Deep-Focus Earthquakes, 228
- Scupin (Prof. H.), Die Nordsudetische Dyas: eine stratigraphisch-paläogeographische Untersuchung, 892
- Seaman [Jones, Lewis, and], Flame Temperatures, 1081
- Sears, jr. (J. E.), Determination of the Yard in Terms of the Wave-length of Light, 965
- Seeder (W. A.), [Prof. E. Gorter and], A Method of Studying Surface Films, 413
- Segré (E.), and Dr. C. J. Bakker, Zeeman Effect of a Forbidden Line, 1076
- Seguin (L. and A.), and A. Labarthe, An Apparatus for the Study of the Phenomena of Injection and of Combustion in Motors by the Ultra-Cinematograph, 421
- Seidell and Birckner, Anti-Neuritic Vitamin, 229
- Seifriz (Prof. W.), and Janet Plowe, Extensibility of Protoplasm, 1045
- Seligman (Prof. C. G.), Acromegaly among the old Northmen, 221; Acromegaly in the Far North, 492
- Sellards (A. W.), Behaviour of the Virus of Yellow Fever in Monkeys and Mice, 555
- Semičev (E.), The Fundamental Features of Electrodynamic relations in Electromagnetic Machinery, 126
- Senderens (J. B.), The Comparative Hydration of Sulphuric Acid and of the Alkaline Bisulphates, 199; The Catalytic Dehydrogenation, in the Gas Phase, of the Fatty Alcohols in the presence of Pumice carrying Sulphuric and Phosphoric Acids, 162
- Serbescu (P.), [G. Bertrand and], The Toxic Power of Aluminium compared with that of Iron, Nickel, and other Metals, 466
- Serbinoff (A.), [M. Neumann and], Limits of Gaseous Explosions, 1040
- Sergi (Prof. S.), The Roman Neanderthal Skull, 306
- Setchell (W. A.), and N. L. Gardner, Marine Algae from the Pacific, 191
- Seth (Prof. J. B.), A Method of obtaining Air Currents of different Humidities, 638
- Seth-Smith (D.), Breeding from Colour Varieties, 379
- Seward (Prof. A. C.), Fossil Plants from the Bokkeveld and Witteberg Beds of South Africa, 1012; Plant Life through the Ages: a Geological and Botanical Retrospect, 559
- Seward (Prof. S. S.), The Paradox of the Ludicrous, 988
- Sewell (Lieut.-Col. R. B. S.), The Evolution of the Excretory System in Cercariae, 459
- Seyewetz (A.), [A. Lumière and], Preparation of Fine Grain Negative Images by Development, 1086
- Shalowitz (A. L.), The Physical Basis of Modern Hydrographic Surveying, 1014
- Shapley (Dr. H.), Flights from Chaos: a Survey of Material Systems from Atoms to Galaxies, 615
- Sharpey-Schafer (Sir E. A.), elected president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 793; The Physiology of Internal Secretion (John Mallet Purser Lecture), 437, 441
- Shaw (Sir Napier), A Century of Meteorology, 925; The Energy of Horizontal Atmospheric Motion, 226
- Sheareroft (W. F. F.), Post-Primary Science. Book 1: First Year's Course, 960
- Sheldon (J. H.), [H. Ramage and], Mineral Content of Eyes, 376
- Sherman (Prof. H. C.), and S. L. Smith, The Vitamins, 743
- Sherrington (Sir Charles), conferment upon, of an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Berne, 681
- Shiga (T.), [T. Ito and], On Scorodite from Kiura Mine, Bungo, Kiushiu, Japan, 977
- Shimizu (S.), [Prof. H. Saegusa and], Anomalous Variation of the Electrical Conductivity of Quartz with Temperature at the Transformation Point, 835
- Shimotomai (N.), Chromosome Multiples in *Chrysanthemum* and *Potentilla*, 72
- Shinoda (Osamu), Starch Digestion in Silkworms, 497
- Shorter (L. R.), Introduction to Vector Analysis: with many fully worked Examples and some Applications to Dynamics and Physics, 626
- Shute (P. G.), [Col. S. P. James, W. D. Nicol, and], The Prevention of Malarial Infection in Human Beings, 404
- Siegbahn (Prof. M.), conferment upon, of an honorary degree by the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, 756, 833
- Signorini (A.), The Profile of Bridge Piers, 43
- Silver (J.), [J. C. Munch and], The Pharmacology of Thallium and its use in Rodent Control, 383
- Silverster (N. L.), Hail Storm, June 14, at Doncaster, 35
- Simonnet (H.), [Mlle. D. Van Stolk, J. Guilbert, H. Pénaud, and], Pure Carotene and Vitamin A, 199
- Simpson (E. S.), and D. G. Murray, A New Siderolite from Bencubbin, Western Australia, 977
- Simpson (Dr. G. C.), The Polar Year 1932-1933, 793
- Simpson (Sir William), [death], 544; [obituary article], 695
- Singer (Dr. C.), A Short History of Biology: a General Introduction to the Study of Living Things, 132; The Beginnings of Science, 7
- Singh (Balwant), [V. I. Vaidhianathan and], Magnetism of Colloidal Gold, 302
- Sinitsin (D. F.), Life-Cycle of *Moniezia expansa*, 676
- Sinnatt (Dr. F. S.), appointed director of Fuel Research under the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, 1072
- de Sitter (Prof. W.), Accuracy of the Heliometer, 274; elected an honorary member of the American Astronomical Society, 634; The Evolution of the Universe, 706; Theories of the Birth of the Planetary System, 972
- Sivaramakrishnan (G.), [S. Ramachandra Rao and], Diamagnetism of Liquid Mixtures, 872
- Sjögren and Svedberg, Molecular Weight of Insulin, 380
- Skeats (Prof. E. W.), Granites of Eastern Australia, 307
- Skinner (H. D.), Elsdon Best, 929
- Skinner (Dr. H. W. B.), The Excitation Potentials of Metallic Lithium 114
- Slater (F. P.), Cotton Growing in Egypt, 766, 1002
- Slater (I. G.), [D. Hanson and], Unsoundness in Aluminium Sand-castings, 502
- Sloan (Dr. H.), [E. O. Lawrence and], Production of High-Speed Canal Rays without the use of High Voltages, 83
- Slouka (H.), The Mass of Saturn's Ring, 972
- Smal (J. Cameron), The late Sir Francis Ogilvie, 118
- Smart (Prof. W. M.), Text-Book on Spherical Astronomy, 207
- Smirnov (N. S.), Two New Species of Rotatoria from the Ussuri Region, 467
- Smith (A. St. Alban), conferment upon, of the Silver Medal of the Zoological Society of London, 332
- Smith (D. E.), [D. H. Tennant, M. S. Gardiner, and], Nature of Golgi Substance, 728
- Smith (D. M.), The Spectrographic Assay of some Alloys of Lead, 554, 802
- Smith (Engr.-Capt. E. C.), Faraday and his Contemporaries, 333; Science in the City of London, 515
- Smith (E. H.), Cooling Effects of Ice on the Oceans, 840
- Smith (Sir Frank), Academic Research and National Dividends, 1069
- Smith (Rev. F.), [obituary], 899
- Smith (F. Campbell), [J. R. Marrack and], The Study of Specific Combination in Immunity Reactions, 1077
- Smith (Prof. G. Elliot): Evolutionary Tendencies in the Jaws and Teeth, 501; Man's Remote Ancestry, 4; and others, Early Man: His Origin, Development and Culture, 951
- Smith (Dr. J. Henderson), Plant Virus Diseases, 635
- Smith (J. W.), Distillation of Dry Liquids, 971
- Smith (Dr. Kenneth M.), A Textbook of Agricultural Entomology, 943; Insect Vectors and Virus Diseases of Plants, 379; Virus Diseases of Plants and their relationship with Insect Vectors, 915
- Smith (M. L.), [B. Topley and], Function of Water Vapour in the Dissociation of a Salt Hydrate, 302
- Smith (Prof. N. J. G.), Making conditions Unsuitable to Infectious Diseases, 801
- Smith (P.), [E. Patricia Allen and], Selection of Skilled Apprentices for the Engineering Trades, 463
- Smith (P. I.), [Ivy Evelyn Norman and], Leather Crafts Manual, 1060
- Smith (S. G.), Cytology of *Anchusa* and its Relation to the Taxonomy of the Genus, 493
- Smith (S. L.), [Prof. H. C. Sherman and], The Vitamins, 743
- Smith (Prof. Sydney), Alcohol and Behaviour, 630
- Smith (W. Campbell), On a New Meteoric Stone from Suwahib, Arabia, 977



- Smithells (Dr. C. J.): Impurities in Metals: their Influence on Structure and Properties. Second edition, 627; S. V. Williams, and E. J. Grimwood, Melting Nickel-Chromium Alloys in Hydrogen, 595
- Smuts (General J. C.), elected Rector of St. Andrews University, 916; The Evolution of the Universe, 718
- Smyth (Prof. H. D.), Negative Ions, 677
- Snell and McElvain, Aceto-acetic Ester Condensation, 229
- Snook (T.), [E. B. Perkins and], Control of Pigment Migration in the Chromatophores of Crustaceans, 423
- Snyder (H.), Bread: a collection of Popular Papers on Wheat, Flour, and Bread. With Biographical Sketch by A. L. Winton, 953
- Soddy (Prof. F.), The Corpuscular Explanation of Cosmic Rays, 408
- Solodkowska (Mme. W.), [W. Swietolawski, Mme. M. Rybicka, and], An Adiabatic Microcalorimeter, 126
- van Soeren (E. H. S.), [H. W. Bronsdon], Application of the Spectrograph to the Analysis of Non-ferrous Metals and Alloys, 554, 802
- Southern (R.), and A. C. Gardiner, Reports from the Limnological Laboratory (2), 1013
- Speakman (J. B.), and Mercia C. Hirst, Constitution of the Keratin Molecule, 1073
- Spence (Dr. R.), The Slow Combustion of Acetylene, 153; Slow Combustion of Hydrocarbons, 873
- Spencer (Prof. J. F.), [V. C. G. Trew and], Diamagnetism of Liquid Mixtures, 152
- Spencer (Dr. L. J.), Hoba (South-West Africa), The Largest known Meteorite, 42; Twelfth List of New Mineral Names, 42
- Spikes (W. H.), The Properties of Matter, 396
- Spilsbury (R. S. J.), Duration and Magnitude of a Lightning Discharge, 872
- Spinks (J. W. T.), Photosensitized Decomposition of Ozone by Bromine, 548
- Sreenivasaya (M.), and H. B. Sreerangachar, Contraction Contents of Enzyme-Substrate Reactions, 585
- Sreerangachar (H. B.), [M. Sreenivasaya and], Contraction Constants of Enzyme-Substrate Reactions, 585
- Stahel (E.), [A. Piccard, F. Dony, and], The Absorption of the Penetrating Gamma Rays by Lead Screens 12-30 cm. thick, 846
- Staig (R. A.), The Fabrician Types of Insects in the Hunterian Collection at Glasgow University, Coleoptera, Part I, 1035
- Stainforth (Flight-Lieut. G. H.), Aeroplane Speed Record, 490, 611
- Stair (R.), [W. W. Coblenz, J. M. Hogue, and], The Spectral Erythemic Reaction of the Human Skin to Ultra-Violet Radiation, 555; [A. Q. Tool and], Ultra-Violet Window Glass, 549
- Stanbury (Florence A.), [Dr. W. R. G. Atkins and], Illumination and Tree Growth, 191
- Stant (Sir Thomas), [death], 404; [obituary article], 485
- Stant (Dr. H. A.), The Bavenda, 614
- Steatite and Porcelain Products, Ltd., Value of Modern Research in Industry, 1033
- Stechschulte (Rev. V. C.), Deep-Focus Earthquakes, 673
- Steele (Dr. Catherine C.), appointed Lecturer in Agricultural Chemistry and Physics at Swanley Horticultural College, 197
- Steele (S.), An Investigation of Infra-Red Radiation from an Engine, 185
- Steffensen (Prof. J. F.), Some Recent Researches in the Theory of Statistics and Actuarial Science, 286
- Stein (Sir Aurel), causes for abandonment of his expedition in Chinese Turkestan, 144
- Step (E.), [obituary], 863
- Stephen (A. C.), Growth of the Cockle, 379
- Stern (E. A.), The Combined Action of Metals and X-Rays on Luminous Bacteria, 503; [G. Nadson and], Action of the Ultra-Violet and X-Rays on the Yeast Cell, 467; The Combined Action of Metals and of X-Rays on Yeasts, 503
- Stetson (Prof. H. T.), Man and the Stars, 615
- Stewart (C. J.), Determination of Position in High Latitudes, with particular reference to Aircraft Observation, 212
- Stewart (Prof. G. W.), The Viscosity of Liquids, 727
- Stewart (Prof. G. W.), and Prof. R. B. Lindsay, Acoustics: a Text on Theory and Applications, 779
- Stewart (Major O.), Cross-Country Flying, 961; Flying as a Career, 961
- Stieber (A.), [L. Hackspill, R. Hocart, and], Crystallised Boron, 1013
- Stirling (Dr. J. D.), appointed to the staff of the Hannah Dairy Research Institute, 81
- Stoddart [Briscoe, Robinson, and], Rhenium Compounds, 192, 729
- van Stolk (Mlle. D.), J. Guilbert, and H. Péneau, Carotene and Vitamin A, 467
- Stone (Edith W.), Joseph Henry, 542
- Stone (Dr. W.), awarded the Otto Hermann medal of the Hungarian Ornithological Society, 670
- Storey (Dr. H. H.), A New Virus Disease of the Tobacco Plant, 187
- Størmer (Prof. C.), The Nature of Cosmic Rays, 83
- Stott (Miss Emma), awarded a Woolmen Company medal, 757
- Stott (V.), Pivots and Jewels, 273
- Stoyko (N.), [R. Jouast and], The Propagation of Short Radio-electric Waves, 82
- Strafford (N.), [T. Callan and], Examination of Dyed Leather in Cases of Alleged Dermatitis, 733
- Straneo (P.), The Unitary Theory of Gravitation and Electricity (2), 1014; (3), 1050
- Strassmann (Prof. P.), Aus der Medizin des Rinascimento. An der Hand des "Leben von Benvenuto Cellini" nach der Übersetzung Goethes, 173
- Stratton (Dr. S. W.), [death], 696; [obituary article], 928
- Streeter (Dr. G.), Human Embryology, 804; and others, Development of the Egg, 1005
- Strehnikov (J. D.), Influence of the Solar Radiations on the Temperature of the Bodies of Insects, 125
- Strömberg (G.), Velocity of Light from the Spiral Nebulae, 587
- Stroobant (Prof. P.), Galactic Rotation, 764; Rotation of the Galaxy and the Solar Apex shown by the Radial Velocities of the Helium Stars, 846; and others, New List of Astronomers and Observatories, 73
- Strunza (M. V.), [L. Binet and], The Hæmatopoietic Power of Carotene, 387
- Stuart (Sir Campbell), appointed Chairman of the Beit Fellowships for Scientific Research, 161
- Stubbs (S. G. B.), and E. W. Bligh, Sixty Centuries of Health and Physick: the Progress of Ideas from Primitive Magic to Modern Medicine, 939
- Stulz (E.), [E. Le Breton, F. Mocoora, and], The Proteolytic Ferments of the Intestinal Juice and of the Pancreatic Juice, 422
- Sturtevant and Schultz, A Hypothesis of 'Sub-genes', 273
- Subrahmanyam (Dr. V.), appointed Professor of Biochemistry at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, 1049
- Sucksmith (W.), Gyromagnetic Effect for Salts of the Iron Group, 640
- Sudhoff (Prof. K.), elected President of the International Council of the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology, 79
- Suess (Prof. E.), Centenary of the Birth of, 251
- Sugden (Dr. S.), [Prof. G. T. Morgan and], Paramagnetism of Bivalent Silver, 31
- Sugiura (Y.), The Diffraction of Proton Waves, 1006
- Sussmilch (C. A.), The Bathurst Senkungsfeld, 467
- Susz (B.), [E. Briner and], The Maximum Concentration of Endothermic Compounds at High Temperatures, 83
- Sutton (H.), and L. F. Le Brocq, The Protection of Magnesium Alloys against Corrosion, 502
- Sutton (L. E.), Structure of the Azides, from their Electric Dipole Moments, 639
- Sutton (T. C.), Structure of the Azide Group, 872
- Suzuki (Seitarô), Constitution of the White Dwarf Stars, 838
- Švagr (E.), [Prof. B. Brauner and], A Physico-chemical Study of the Sulphates of the Rare Earths, 1013
- Svedberg (Prof.), The Molecular Weights of the Proteins in their Native State, 999; [Sjögren and], Molecular Weight of Insulin, 380
- Sverdrup (H. U.), Audibility of the Aurora Polaris, 457



- Swarth (H. S.), Birds of the Galapagos Islands, 762  
 Swellengrebel (Prof. N. H.), Malaria in South Africa, 497  
 Swenson (H.), [E. Rasmussen and], Intensity Anomalies in Rare Gas Spectra, 188  
 Swietolawski (W.), and Mlle. E. Bartoszewiczowna, Application of the Adiabatic Microcalorimeter to the Determination of the Heat of Adsorption and Vaporisation, 126; Mme. M. Rybicka, and Mme. W. Solodkowska, An Adiabatic Microcalorimeter, 126; and Mlle. L. Wajcenblit, The Ternary Heteroazeotrope formed of Carbon Disulphide, Acetone, and Water, 918  
 Swinburne (Major U. P.), [death], 863  
 Swinnerton (Prof. H. H.), Outlines of Palæontology. Second edition, 173  
 Szabó (I.), Absterben und Entwicklung, 382  
 Szent-Györgyi (Prof. A.), Chemical Nature of the Tigroid, 761
- Takvorian (S.), Investigation on Element 61 by means of the X-Rays, 82  
 Talavera (F.), and L. A. Faustino, Industrial Shells of the Philippines, 676  
 Talbot (P. Amaury), Anthropology in Nigeria, 285  
 Talbot (Col. the Hon. M. G.), 437  
 Tallarico (G.), Biological Value of the Products of Manured or Artificially Fertilised Soil, 595  
 Tallent (Violet K.), Eclipse Plumage in the Mallard, 672  
 Tannery (Paul), Mémoires scientifiques de, Publiés par L.-L. Heiberg et H.-G. Zeuthen. Tome 10 (Suppl. au Tome 6): Sciences modernes, généralités historiques, 1892-1930. Édité avec la collaboration de J. Pères, 613  
 Tavener (P. A.), The Canada Goose and its Races, 874  
 Tawney (R. H.), Equality (Halley Stewart Lectures, 1929), 964  
 Taylor (Brook), Bicentenary of the Death of, 1068  
 Taylor (Prof. H. S.), Activated Adsorption of Hydrogen by Zinc and Chromium Oxides, 636  
 Taylor (J. W.), [obituary], 666  
 Taylor (R.), [Prof. G. T. Morgan and], Syntheses of Ethyl Alcohol, 38  
 Tchakirian (A.), [C. Levaditi, J. Bardet, A. Vaisman, and], The Distribution of Gallium in the Organism, 466  
 Tcheng da tchang, [F. Reymond and], The Separation of Polonium and of Protactinium fixed on Tantalum Oxide, 386  
 Teegan (J. A. C.), A Spark Method of Measuring High Resistance, 585  
 Tempany (Dr. H. A.), and G. E. Mann, Principles of Tropical Agriculture, 954  
 Temple (Dr. G.), An Introduction to Quantum Theory, 960  
 Tennant (D. H.), M. S. Gardiner, and D. E. Smith, Nature of Golgi Substance, 728  
 Terada (Prof. T.), Curvature of Island and Mountain Arcs, 498  
 Terzi (A. J. Engel), and S. Maulik, Dr. L. W. Sambon, 486  
 Thomas (B.), Alarms and Excursions in Arabia, 956  
 Thomas (J. A.), Action of Sea Water, in which Carotene has remained, on the Experimental Development of *Paracentrotus lividus*, 978  
 Thomas (Prof. O.), translated by B. Miall, The Heavens and the Universe, 244  
 Thomas (P. E.), [R. Fosse, A. Brunel, and]: Application of the Quantitative Spectrophotometric Analysis of Allantoin, 421; [R. Fosse, A. Brunel, and], The Quantitative Analysis of Very Small Quantities of Allantoin at High Dilutions, 315  
 Thomas (Prof. T. Y.): On the Unified Field Theory (3), 83; The Elementary Theory of Tensors: with Applications to Geometry and Mechanics, 626  
 Thompson (C. J. S.), The Mystery and Lore of Monsters: with Accounts of some Giants, Dwarfs, and Prodigies, 90  
 Thompson (Prof. D'Arcy W.), Embryology and the Theory of Polyhedra, 31  
 Thompson (Prof. F. C.), [E. L. Francis and], The Drawing of Non-ferrous Wires, 554; [H. Greenwood and], Wires drawn through Rotating Discs, 152  
 Thompson (G. A.), awarded the John Gray Jubilee Scholarship, 805  
 Thompson (J. E.), A Manual of the Slide Rule: its History, Principle, and Operation. Second printing, 563.  
 Thompson (W. G.), awarded the Ferranti Scholarship of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, 581  
 Thompson (Prof. W. P.), Chromosome Homologies in Wheat, Rye, and Aegilops, 640  
 Thoms (Prof. H.), presented with the Hanbury Memorial Medal, 667; the work of, 667  
 Thomson (Prof. G. P.), The Wave Mechanics of Free Electrons, 47  
 Thomson (J.), The Ionising Efficiency of Electronic Impacts in Air, 81  
 Thomson (Sir J. Arthur), and Prof. P. Geddes, Life: Outlines of General Biology. 2 Vols., 1056; and Miss Nita Rennet, Antarctic Alcyonaria, Madreporaria, and Antipatharia, 71  
 Thomson (Sir J. J.), and others, James Clerk Maxwell, 607  
 Thomson (W. A.), A Method of Recording Bright Sunshine, 15  
 Thon (N.), [C. Marie and], The Phenomena of Expansion presented by certain Electrolytic Deposits of Metals, 421  
 Thornton (Prof. W. M.), Measurement of High Voltages, 875  
 Thouvenin (J.), [G. Bruhat and], The Double Refraction produced by the Compression of Amorphous Silica and Crystallised Quartz and its Dispersion in the Ultra-Violet, 1050  
 Ti (Sou Phou), Action of Ethylmagnesium Bromide on *N*-diethylmonochloracetamide, 199  
 Tickner (Dr. F. W.), One Touch of Nature: a Literary Nature Study Reader for Boys and Girls, 624  
 Tiercy (G.): Silvering Telescope Mirrors, 236; The Systematic Use of the Rotation of the Transit Instrument, 734; Variation of the Radial Velocity of U Aquilæ, 682  
 Tilley (Dr. C. E.), elected Professor of Mineralogy and Petrology in Cambridge University, 41; elected a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 804  
 Tillyard (Dr. R. J.), Kansas Permian Insects, 414  
 Timoshenko (Prof. S.), Strength of Materials. 2 Parts, 617  
 du Toit (Prof. P. J.), elected President of the South African Association, 802  
 Tolman (R. C.), On Thermodynamic Equilibrium in a Static Einstein Universe, 164  
 Tolmatchev (P. I.), The Equilibrium in Solutions of Barium Nitrate in Nitric Acid at the Temperatures of 0° and 25°, 163  
 Tomaschek (Prof. R.), Lines of Large Frequency Shift in the Raman Spectra of Crystals, 495  
 Tomlinson (H.), [obituary article], 58  
 Toms (Dr. H.), School Certificate Magnetism and Electricity, 431  
 Tookey (W. A.), The Internal Combustion Engine and its Performance, 634  
 Tool (A. Q.), and R. Stair, Ultra-Violet Window Glass, 549  
 Toperczer (M.), [A. Schedler and], The Distribution of Declination in Austria at the Epoch 1930-0, 43  
 Topley (B.), Absolute Rates of Heterogeneous Gas Reactions, 115; and M. L. Smith, Function of Water Vapour in the Dissociation of a Salt Hydrate, 302  
 Totton (Capt. A. K.), Symbiotic Alga of Corals, 760  
 Toul (F.), [F. Novotny and], The Estimation of Traces of Elementary Oxygen, 1013  
 la Tour du Pin (D.), The Elective Fixation of Medicinal Ions by the Electromagnet, 199  
 Townsend (C. H.), Age of the Giant Tortoises of Galapagos, 227  
 Tranzschel (W.), An *Æcidium* of *Puccinia pygmaea* Erikss. on *Berberis*, 467  
 Travers (Prof. M. W.), L. E. Hockin, and T. J. P. Pearce, Influence of Hydrogen on Chemical Changes in Silica Vessels, 66  
 Tremblot (R.), Application of (Optical) Interference to some Problems of Flow at High Velocities, 733  
 Trevino (S. N.), [C. E. Parmenter, C. A. Bevans, and], Articulation of Isolated Sounds, 380  
 Trew (V. C. G.), and Prof. J. F. Spencer, Diamagnetism of Liquid Mixtures, 152



- Trillat (A.), Experiment on Infection by Air, 235  
 Trimen (H.), A Hand-Book to the Flora of Ceylon. Part 6 : Supplement, A. H. G. Alston, 891  
 Troisier (J.), and R. Cattan, Exanthematic Fever in Man, without Visible Symptoms, caused by *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*, 422  
 Trombe (F.), [M. Billy and], The Preparation of Pure Cerium, 734  
 Troughton (E. Le G.), Three New Bats, of the genera *Pteropus*, *Nyctimene*, and *Chearephon*, from Melanesia, 387  
 Troup (Dr. W. A.), Therapeutic Uses of Infra-Red Rays, 953  
 Trueman (Prof. A. E.), The Evidence of Palæontology with regard to Evolution, 990  
 Trumpler (Dr. R. J.), Distance of the Great Nebula in Orion, 73  
 Tschermak (E.), Some Flower Anomalies and their Mode of Inheritance in Primulas, 43  
 Tsuboi (Prof. C.), Crust Movements after the Tango Earthquake of 1927, 380  
 Tsvetkov (A.), On the Fundamental Psycho-physical Law, 503  
 Tubangui (A.), Echinostomes from Rats, 227  
 Tucholski (T.), Spectra of Metals obtained by Explosive Reactions, 126  
 Tugarinov (A.), A Fossil Ostrich from Transbaicalia, 127  
 Tung (Y. M.), [T. Komai and], Anal Gland of *Squilla*, 762  
 Tunmann (Dr. A.), Pflanzenmikrochemie : ein Hilfsbuch beim mikrochemischen Studium pflanzlicher Objekte. Zweite Auflage bearbeitet von Prof. L. Rosenthaler, 953  
 Turcey (A.), [F. Loewinson-Lessing, V. Mitkevitch, and], Experiments in the Artificial Magnetisation of Limonites, 127  
 Turnbull (C.), Carbon Contacts, 968  
 Turnbull (Prof. H. W.), Our Mathematical Ancestry, 739  
 Turner (E. P.), Trees used in State Afforestation in New Zealand, 417  
 Tutin (F.), The Comma Butterfly in England, 1041  
 Tutton (Dr. A. E. H.), Determination of the Yard in Wave-lengths of Light, 840, 965  
 Twort (F. W.), conferment upon, of the title of professor, 975  
 Twyman (F.), The 'Spekker' Photometer for Ultra-violet Spectrophotometry, 770 ; and A. Harvey, The Validity of the Schwarzschild Relation as applied to the Use of the Logarithmic Sector, 770 ; and C. S. Hitchen, Estimation of Dissolved Metals, 587  
 Tyndall-Biscoe (R.), Southern Rhodesian Geology, 971  
 Tyrrell (G. W.), and M. A. Peacock, The Petrology of Iceland (2), 881
- Ulich (Prof. H.), Chemische Thermodynamik : Einführung in die Lehre von den chemischen Affinitäten und Gleichgewichten, 52  
 Ulyyett (P.), awarded a Frank Smart Prize of Cambridge University, 80  
 Upasaka (E.), A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity, 892  
 Urey (H. C.), Prediction of Isotopes, 498  
 Urion (E.), 1, 2-Cyclohexanedione or Dihydroprocatechol, 315
- Vaidhianathan (Dr. V. I.) : Valency and Diamagnetism of Titanium in the Tetrachloride, 189 ; and Balwant Singh, Magnetism of Colloidal Gold, 302  
 Vaidya (W. M.), [Prof. A. Fowler and], Spectrum of Carbon Disulphide Flames, 192  
 Vaillant (Dr. G. C.), Models of Temples in Central America, 823  
 Vaillant (P.), The Constitution of Solutions deduced from Absorption Measurements, 918  
 Vaisman (A.), [C. Levaditi, J. Bardet, A. Tchakirian, and], The Distribution of Gallium in the Organism, 466  
 Valle (G.), Experimental Investigations on the Flash Discharge, 806  
 Vandel (Prof. A.), La parthénogenèse, 941  
 Van Name (Dr. W. G.), New North and South American Ascidiars, 71
- Van Stolk (Mlle. D.), J. Guilbert, H. Péneau, and H. Simonnet, Pure Carotene and Vitamin A, 199  
 Varetton (E.), [G. Mezzadrola and], Action of Ultra-short Electromagnetic Waves (2-3 metres) on Amylase, 43  
 Vassitz (Prof. M.), Recent Excavations at Vinča, 842  
 Veil (Mlle. Suzanne), The Diffusion and Cataphoresis of Methylene Blue in Gelatin, 1013  
 Velluz (L.), [L. Debucquet and], Organic Compounds of Tungsten and Molybdenum containing Sulphur, 422  
 Venkateswaran (S.), Light Scattering in Liquids, 870  
 Venkiteshwaran (L. P.), [Dr. L. A. Ramdas and], Spectrum of Glow-worm, 726  
 Vereschagin (G.), Influence of Lake Baikal on the Summer Thermic Régime of the River Angara, 467  
 Vernadskij (V.), The Concentration of Radium by Plants, 127 ; and A. Vinogradov, Chemical Composition of *Lemna* as a Specific Character, 770 ; and A. Vinogradov, The Chemical Composition of *Lemna* as Characteristic of the Species, 882  
 Vernon (Dr. W. H. J.), and L. Whitby, Control of Humidity of Air Currents, 837  
 Viets (Dr. H. R.), A Brief History of Medicine in Massachusetts, 135  
 Vigoureux (P.), Quartz Resonators and Oscillators, 961  
 Villard (P.), The Reduction of Soda, 978  
 Villat (Prof. H.), Mécanique der fluides, 654  
 Vinassa (P.), Valency and Symmetry, 1014  
 Vincent (H.), A Theory of the Constitution of Antibodies, 1049 ; New Researches on the Cryptotoxins, 918  
 Vinogradov (A.), [V. Vernadskij and], Chemical Composition of *Lemna* as a Specific Character, 770 ; Chemical Composition of *Lemna* as Characteristic of the Species, 882  
 Vitali (G.), The Calculation of a Lens, 1050  
 Vlodavec (N.), The Extraction of Alumina and Alkalis from the Nephelines and Nephelinites of the Chibin Mountains, 770  
 Vogel (W.), [M. Hochstadter, E. Bowden, and], An Improved Method of Constructing High-voltage Cables, 933  
 Volterra (Prof. V.), Italian Physicists and Faraday's Researches, 342 ; Leçons sur la théorie mathématique de la lutte pour la vie. Rédigées par M. Brelot, 963  
 Vonwiller (O. U.), A Generation of Electron Theory, 200  
 Voskuil (Dr. W. H.), Minerals in Modern Industry, 508  
 Vowles (H. P.), Origins of Power Engineering, 800 ; and Mrs. Vowles, The Work of Jacob Perkins, 1070  
 Vrkljan (V. S.), The Velocity of Light, 269  
 Vsssviatky (S.), The Origin of Comets of Short Period, 1045
- Wad (Yeshwant D.), [A. Howard and], The Waste Products of Agriculture : their Utilisation as Humus, 854  
 Waddington (H. G.), [obituary], 179  
 Wager (L. R.), Jointing and Tectonics of the Craven Area, 460  
 Wainer (Papish and), The Discovery of Element No. 87, 789  
 Wait (W. E.), Oceanic Bird Wanderers to Ceylon, 728  
 Wajcenblit (Mlle. L.), [W. Swietoslawski and], The Ternary Heteroazeotrope formed of Carbon Disulphide, Acetone, and Water, 918  
 Wakeman (R. L.), [R. Lespieau and], The Preparation of the Trimethylene Hydrocarbons, 235 ; [R. Lespieau, M. Bourguel, and], The Raman Effect in Chemistry, 503  
 Wales (Prince of), The Application of Modern Science to Modern Industry, 60  
 Walker (Sir Gilbert), and A. C. Phillips, The Forms of Stratified Clouds. Part 1, Experimental ; Part 2, Discussion, 917  
 Walker (H. C.), Charts and Data on Marine Boiler Design : a Summary of the Standard Formulæ in Chart Form with Tables and Notes, 962  
 Walker (M. E. M.), Pioneers of Public Health : the Story of some Benefactors of the Human Race, 6  
 Waller (W. W.), 'All or None' : a Question of Nomenclature, 70



- Warburg (Prof. O.), awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine for 1931, 789
- Ward (F. A. B.), [Lord Rutherford, W. B. Lewis, and], Long-Range  $\alpha$ -Particles, 37
- Ward (Dr. J.), appointed head of the Department of Civil and Mechanical Engineering of Huddersfield Technical College, 916
- Warner (S. G.), Histological Polarisation of Lateral Giant-fibres in the Crayfish, 164
- Warner (W. L.), Marugin Warfare, 910
- Warren (Prof. E.), The Spermatogenesis of Ticks, 454
- Wasiutynski (J.), The Variable Star AK Herculis, 1081
- Waterhouse (E. F.), and W. R. Schoeller, The Separation of the Earth Acids from Metals of the Hydrogen Sulphide Group, 845
- Waterhouse (H.), and R. Willows, Effects of Cold-Rolling and of Heat-Treatment on some Lead Alloys, 502
- Waters (N. F.), Inheritance of Body Weight in Domestic Fowl, 846
- Waters (Dr. W. A.), A Connexion between Fluorescence and Free Neutral Radicals, 905
- Waters (W. T.), Size-inheritance in Poultry, 1005
- Watkins (A. E.), appointed University Lecturer in Cytology in Cambridge University, 844
- Watson (Dr. C.), The 'Vital' Factor in Diet, 154
- Watson (E. A.), The Coal Ignition System, 865
- Watson (F. R.), Bibliography of Acoustics of Buildings, 904
- Watson and Sons (Electro-Medical), Ltd.: Catalogues of Diathermy Apparatus and Equipment for X-ray Therapy, 266; Portable X-ray Medical Unit, 1007
- Watt (R. A. Watson), and O. F. Brown, Radio Research in the British Empire, 755
- Watt (W. S.), appointed Meteorologist to the Commonwealth of Australia, 634
- Wattenberg (Dr. H.), [Dr. K. Buch, H. W. Harvey, and], Apparent Dissociation Constants of Carbon Dioxide in Sea-water of different Salt Contents, 411
- Watts (late Dr. W. Marshall), Index of Spectra. Appendix Z: Iron and Iron Oxide, 1060
- Wavre (R.), From the Human Scale to the Terrestrial Scale, 236; The Theory of Potential (1 and 2), 682
- Wayland (E. J.), *Homo sapiens* and African Prehistory, 1003; Progress of the Geological Survey of Uganda, 1919-1929, 331; The Katwe Crater-lake, Uganda, 977
- Wayling (H. G.), Faraday's London Friends, 482
- Weatherall (R.), Mortality among Plants and its Bearing on Natural Selection, 33
- Webb (C. S.), New Light on the Habits of Trogons, 935
- Webb [Le Fèvre and], Molecular Weight Determinations, 38
- Webster (G. W.), The Fulani of Northern Nigeria, 874
- Webster (T. A.), [F. A. Askew, Miss H. M. Bruce, Dr. R. K. Callow, J. St. L. Philpot, and], Crystalline Vitamin D, 758
- Wedgwood (G. A.), Young's Modulus for Steel in Two Directions in a Bar, 733
- Wedmore (E. B.), A. M. Cassie, and W. B. Whitney, Electric Circuit Breaker Research, 675
- Weiglé (J.), [H. Saini and], A Possible Transformation of Maleic Acid into Fumaric Acid, 235
- Weinfurter [Fink and], Methylene Blue Stain for Yeast Cells, 306
- Weintraub (S.), appointed an Assistant Lecturer in Physics at University College, Southampton, 278
- Weir (Dr. J.), Carboniferous Bellerophons, 497
- Weiss (Prof. F. E.), Segregation of Floral Characters in the Wild Oxslip, 305
- Wellcome (Dr. H.), Benefactions of, 931; foundation of a Gold Medal in connexion with the Royal Anthropological Institute, 904
- Wellish (Prof. E. M.), Photoelectrons and Negative Ions, 547
- Westaway (F. W.), Craftsmanship in the Teaching of Elementary Mathematics, 950
- Weston (W. A. R. Dillon), Effect of Light on Urediniospores of Black Stem Rust of Wheat, *Puccinia graminis tritici*, 67
- Wetstein (Prof. R.), [death], 404; [obituary article], 436
- Weygandt (Prof. C.), The Wissahickon Hills: Memories of Leisure Hours out of doors in an Old Countryside, 208
- Weymouth (Miss A. I.), The Palo Alto Tree, 904
- Whale (P. B.), The Macmillan Committee's Report on Finance and Industry, 730
- Whearty, jr. (S. F.), [W. D. Bancroft and], Activation by Charcoal, 280
- Wheat (W. N.), [W. M. Hampton and], Recent Developments in Optical Glass Manufacture, 926
- Wheeler [Kirby and], Explosions in Closed Cylinders, 729
- Wheeler (W. H.), awarded a Beit Fellowship for Scientific Research, 161; [Prof. W. A. Bone, R. P. Frazer, and], Flame Propagation in an Electric Field, 274
- Whiddington (Prof. R.), and J. E. Roberts, Electron Exchange Phenomena in the Excited Atom, 966
- Whitaker (A.), Physics in Sound Recording, 933
- Whitby (L.), [Dr. W. H. J. Vernon and], Control of Humidity of Air Currents, 837
- White (H. E.), Wave-mechanical Models of Atoms, 228
- Whitehead (Dr. T.), Respiration of Healthy and Leaf Roll Potatoes, 967
- Whitlock (T. G.), Elementary Applied Aerodynamics, 654
- Whitney (W. B.), [E. B. Wedmore, A. M. Cassie, and], Electric Circuit Breaker Research, 675
- Whitney (Prof. W. R.), Faraday's Researches and the United States, 353
- Whittaker (Prof. E. T.), awarded the Sylvester Medal of the Royal Society, 821; presented with the Sylvester Medal of the Royal Society, 974
- Whitworth (H. F. W.), The Mineralogy and Origin of the Natural Beach Sand Concentrate of N.S.W., 316
- Whyte (L. L.), Critique of Physics, 964
- Whytlaw-Gray (Prof. R.), [H. S. Patterson, W. Cawood, and], The Atomic Weight of Fluorine, 375
- Wickens (C. H.), Editor: J. Stonham, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia. No. 23, 1930, 514
- Wieland (Prof. H.), elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Society, 64
- Wigginton (R.), Coal and its Use, 1024
- Wigglesworth (Dr. V. B.), Excretion of Uric Acid, 116; The Extent of Air in the Tracheoles of some Terrestrial Insects, 917
- Wigham, A Peat Fuel Power Station in Russia, 406; Industrialisation in Russia, Progress of, 544
- Wilcocks (Prof. R. W.), Intelligence, Environment, and Heredity, 801
- Wilhelm (J. O.), [Prof. J. C. McLennan, A. C. Burton, A. Pitt, and], Superconductivity at High Frequencies, 1004
- Wilkins (Sir Hubert), presented with the gold medal and diploma of the Italian Royal Geographical Society, 184; Progress of the *Nautilus* Expedition, 439
- Willey (Dr. E. J. B.), and S. G. Foord, An Oxidisable 'Active Nitrogen', 493
- Williams (A. E.), The Coco-nut Oil Industry, 755
- Williams (J. G.), Textiles on Test: a Study for Distributor and Consumer of the Wearing and Washing Properties of Fabrics and Garments, 855
- Williams (R. C.), [J. Pryde and], The Pyranoid Structure of Glucuronic Acid and of Theophylline Arabinoside, 187
- Williams (Prof. S. R.), Magnetic Phenomena: an Elementary Treatise, 623
- Williams (S. V.), [Dr. C. J. Smithells, E. J. Grimwood, and], Melting Nickel-Chromium Alloys in Hydrogen, 595
- Willis (Prof. B.), Living Africa: a Geologist's Wanderings through the Rift Valleys, 87
- Willoughby (Dr. W. G.), Public Health—To-day and Tomorrow, 143
- Willows (R.), [H. Waterhouse and], Effects of Cold-Rolling and of Heat-Treatment on some Lead Alloys, 502
- Wilmore (Dr. A.), The Groundwork of Modern Geography: an Introduction to the Science of Geography. Third edition, 955
- Wilson (Sir Arnold), The Epic and the Tragedies of Civilisation, 902
- Wilson (Dr. Isabel), How You Work: an Introduction to the Human Body, 136



- Winegarden (H. M.), [H. Borsook and], Work of the Kidney in the Production of Urine; The Energy Cost of the Excretion of Urine, 83
- Wintenberg (W. J.), Indian Archæology in Eastern Canada, 1005
- Winterbotham (Brig. H. S. L.), The Small-scale Maps of the Ordnance Survey, 997
- Winton (Dr. F. R.), appointed University Lecturer in Physiology in Cambridge University, 420
- Wishart (Dr. J.), Mathematics for Actuaries and others, 286
- Withers (R. B.), Development of the Tabulate Coral, *Pleurodictyum megastomum*, 127
- Woldman (Dr. N. E.), Physical Metallurgy Laboratory Manual, 779
- Woldstedt (Dr. P.), Das Eiszeitalter: Grundlinien einer Geologie des Diluviums, 394
- Wolf (Prof. A.), Textbook of Logic, 6
- Wolf (Prof. M.), The Faint Outer Satellites of Jupiter, 912
- Wolfenden (J. H.), Measurement of the Electricity liberated during the Downgrade Reactions of Organic Compounds, 69
- Wolff (Prof. L. K.), [A. Emmerie, M. v. Eekelen, and], Vitamin A and the Antimony Chloride Reaction, 495
- Wolfke (Prof. M.), and Dr. J. Mazur, Change of Dielectric Polarisation of Carbon Disulphide with Temperature, 871; Change of Dielectric Polarisation of Nitrobenzene with Temperature, 584
- Wolfram (Dr. R.), The Sword Dances of Austria, 823
- Wollan (E. O.), Scattering by Diatomic Gases, 1014
- Woo (Y. H.), The Intensity of Total Scattering of X-rays by Gases (1 and 2), 1014
- Wood (H. E.), Encke's Comet, 156
- Wood (J. G.), [T. G. B. Osborn, T. B. Paltridge, and], The Autecology of *Stipa nitida*: a Study of a Fodder Grass in Arid Australia, 918
- Wood (Prof. R. W.), and G. H. Dieke, Analysis of Complicated Band Spectra with the Aid of Magnetic Rotation Spectra, 545
- Wood (W. A.), Anomalous X-ray Diffraction Intensities, 272; Lattice-distortion of Cold-drawn Constantan Wire, 917
- Woodman (Dr. H. E.), Home-grown Feeding Stuffs, 298
- Wooster (Nora), Crystal Structure of Molybdenum Trioxide: a Correction, 35
- Wormell (Dr. T. W.), reappointed Observer in Meteorological Physics in Cambridge University, 420
- Wragg (A.), [J. E. Newson and], The Failure of High-strength Brass, 503
- Wulf (O. R.), and E. H. Melvin, Ultra-violet Spectrum of Ozone, 763
- Wulff (J.), [Dr. J. B. Green and], Hyperfine Structure of Thallium II, 409
- Wüst (K.), [Prof. K. Fajans and], Translated by B. Topley: A Textbook of Practical Physical Chemistry, 852
- Wylie (C. C.), Calendar Reform, 841
- Wynn-Williams (Dr.), An Application of Thyratrons, 307
- Yakimach (A.), Phosphate of Trivalent Manganese and of Aluminium, 315
- Yio (Ouang Te), The Physiological Nature of the Diastase secreted by the Ecdosion Gland in the Plagiostomes (*Scylliorhinus canicula*), 846
- Yokoya (Dr. Zu), Larval Freshwater Shrimps from Japan, 874
- Yonge (Dr. C. M.), Symbiotic Algæ of Corals, 760; The Significance of the Relationship between Corals and Zooxanthellæ, 309
- Yorke (D.), Bird Migrants at Rossitten, 440
- Young (Dr. J. S.), appointed Musgrave Professor of Pathology in Queen's University, Belfast, 804
- Zachariassen (W. H.), Structure of XO<sub>3</sub> Groups in Crystals, 274
- Zachvatkin (A.), Periodic Variations in the Level and in the Chemical Composition of the Water of Lake Gusinø, Transbaikalia, 422
- Zambonini (F.), and S. Restaino, Praseodymium and Thallous Sulphates, 1014
- Zeeman (Prof. P.), Faraday's Researches on Magneto-Optics and their Development, 365; J. H. Gisolf, and T. L. de Bruin, Magnetic Resolution and Nuclear Moment of Rhenium, 637
- von Zeerleder (A.), Influence of Variations in Heat-treatment and Ageing on Duralumin, 554
- Zeidenfeld (S.), X-Ray Fibre Photography, 70
- Zeller (A.), Resistance Experiments on Red Alga, 467
- Zinner (Prof. E.), Die Geschichte der Sternkunde: von den ersten Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, 986



## TITLE INDEX

- $\alpha$ -Particles, Long-Range, Lord Rutherford, F. A. B. Ward, and W. B. Lewis, 37
- $\alpha$ -Rays, The Long Path, Emitted by ThC+C' and some determinations of the Velocities of the  $\alpha$ -Rays, S. Rosenblum, 1050
- Aberdeen University, Conferment of Doctorates, 124
- Abraxas*, Effect of certain Substances and of Heat on Cells of, Prof. J. B. Gatenby and Joyce C. Hill, 31
- Absorption Spectra of Crystals at Low Temperatures as references in the Measurement of Stellar Velocities, S. Freed, 33
- Absterben und Entwicklung, I. Szabó, 382
- Academic Research and National Dividends, Sir Frank Smith, 1069
- Accelerometer, A Remote Electrically Recording, with particular reference to Wheel-Impact Measurements, Dr. F. Aughtie, 918
- "Accredited Higher Institutions", 733
- Acetaldehyde and Air, Ignition of Mixtures of, M. Prettre, 503
- Aceto-Acetic Ester Condensation, Snell and McElvain, 229
- Acetylene, The Slow Combustion of, R. Spence, 153
- Acheron*, H.M.S., The Machinery of, 111
- Acid: Ethyl Sulphite, The Chloride of, and the Neutral Mixed Alkyl Sulphites, P. Carré and P. Maucière, 386; Igneous Rocks, The Origin of, Prof. A. Holmes, 120
- Acido-proteolytes and Thermophiles in the Pasteurisation of Milk, C. Gorini, 43
- Acoustical Problems of Broadcasting Studios, N. Ashbridge, 844
- Acoustics: a Text on Theory and Applications, Prof. G. W. Stewart and Prof. R. B. Lindsay, 779; of Buildings, Bibliography of, F. R. Watson, 904
- Acromegaly: in the Far North, Prof. L. Hogben, 375; Dr. M. Perkins, 491; Prof. C. G. Seligman, 492; among the Old Northmen, Prof. C. G. Seligman, 221
- Acrorhynchus baicalensis* Rubtsoff (Turbellaria, Rhabdocœla) from Lake Baikal, N. Nasonov, 127
- Actinomycetales, The, H. L. Jensen (1), 279
- Activated Adsorption, Prof. W. E. Garner, 583
- 'Active Nitrogen', An Oxidisable, Dr. E. J. B. Willey and S. G. Foord, 493
- Activity Coefficients and the Debye-Hückel Equation, 499
- Administrators, Scientific Men as, 237
- Adobe Brick Analysis for Plant Contents, G. W. Hendry, 1006
- Adrenaline: Formation of, in the Suprarenal Gland, J. E. Abelov and R. Argaud, 682; Hypertensive action of, The Influence of Dextrorotatory Pseudo-Cocaine on the, F. Mercier, 1050
- Æneas*, Elements of the Trojan Planet, C. J. Krieger, 764
- Aerobacter*, Bacteria belonging to the Sub-genus, M. Grimes and A. J. Hennerty, 162
- Aerodynamics, Elementary Applied, T. G. Whitlock, 654
- Aeroplane: Flight: between Australia and England, Record, J. A. Mollison, 266; Round the Earth on a 'Small Circle' Course, Post and Gatty, 60; Manual, The Light, F. D. Bradbrooke, 961; Speed Records by Flight-Lieut. J. N. Boothman and Flight-Lieut. G. H. Stainforth, 490; Survey of Peru, 172
- Aeroplanes and Mosquitoes, 1072
- Aerosols: Charged, and Ball Lightning, W. C. Reynolds, 584; Highly Charged, A Curious Phenomenon shown by, W. Cawood and H. S. Patterson, 150; Properties of, S. C. Blacktin, 968
- Africa: Botanical visit to, Hutchinson, 218; Living, a Geologist's Wanderings through the Rift Valleys, Prof. B. Willis, 87; in Transition, Lord Lugard, 730; Native Administration in, 685; View, Prof. J. S. Huxley, 87
- African: Languages and Cultures, International Institute of, Grant to the, by the Rockefeller Foundation, 265; Prehistory, *Homo sapiens* and, E. J. Wayland, 1003; Settlement and the Origin of Rift Valleys, Prof. J. W. Gregory, 87
- Agar-liquefying Bacteria, Distribution of, H. Nicol, 1041
- Agricultural: Botany, National Institute of, Policy of the, Prof. Engledow, 184; Entomology, A Textbook of, Dr. Kenneth M. Smith; Dr. A. E. Cameron, 943; Devices in Germany, New, R. Borlase Matthews, 297; Research Council, Sir William Dampier appointed Secretary of the, 299
- Agriculture: and Physics, 391; International Aspects of, 597; Science and, in New Zealand, 981; The Changing Outlook in, Sir John Russell, 1027; The International Institute of, Dr. A. Hobson, 737; The Waste Products of: their Utilization as Humus, A. Howard and Yeshwant D. Wad, 854
- Agriculturists, British and Danish, Exchange of, 181
- Air: and Gases, Flow and Measurement of, A. B. Eason. Second edition, 654; Condensation of, into Liquid, Prof. E. O. von Lippman, 666; Currents: Control of Humidity of, Dr. P. A. Buxton; Dr. W. H. J. Vernon and L. Whitby, 837; of Different Humidities, A Method of obtaining, Prof. J. B. Seth, 638; in the Tracheoles of some Terrestrial Insects, Extent of, Dr. V. B. Wigglesworth, 917; Oxygen, and Nitrogen, The Specific Heats of, from 20° C. to 370° C., P. S. H. Henry, 1049; Pollution at Pittsburgh, H. B. Meller, 307; -pressures upon a Bird's Wing, Lieut. R. R. Graham, 119; Warm and Cold Saturated, Mixing of, K. Hidaka, 911
- Aircraft Observation, Determination of Position in High Latitudes, with particular reference to, C. J. Stewart, 212
- Airships *R* 38, *R* 101, and others, Causes of the Loss of, A. Krylov, 683
- Air Speed Record, New World, Flight-Lieut. G. H. Stainforth, 611
- Aitken Condensation Nuclei, A. R. Hogg, 908
- AK Herculis, The Variable Star, J. Wasiutynski, 1081
- Alchemical Apparatus, Prof. J. R. Partington, 118
- Alchemie, Entstehung und Ausbreitung der, Prof. E. O. von Lippmann. Band 2: Ein Lese- und Nachschlage-Buch, 774
- Alchemist, The Travels of an: the Journey of the Taoist Ch'ang-Ch'un from China to the Hindukush at the Summons of Chingiz Khan. Recorded by his Disciple, Li Chih-Ch'ang. Translated with an Introduction by A. Waley, 509
- Alchemy, History of, Dr. E. J. Holmyard, 774
- Alcohol: and Behaviour, Prof. Sydney Smith, 630; Combustion of, by the Pœcilotherm, M. Nicloux, 682
- Alcoholic Fermentation: Action of various Halogen Derivatives on, P. Cayrol, 770; The Kinetics of the, J. Medvedev, 163
- Alcohols, Oxidation of the, by the Acetic Ferments, H. Quéré, 770
- Aldehydes, The Ozonation of, and the Theory of Active Molecules, E. Briner, A. Demolis, and H. Paillard, 235
- Algebra: A School, as far as the Advanced Course in the School Certificate Stage, A. M. Bozman, 1061
- Alginate Acid: On, its Mode of Occurrence and its Constitution, T. Dillon and Annie McGuinness, 162
- Alkaline Diacid Phosphates, Action of Heat on the, L. Hackspill and R. Lauffenburger, 682
- 'All or None': a Question of Nomenclature, W. W. Waller, 70
- Allantoin: Application of the Quantitative Spectrophotometric Analysis of, to the Blood of some Mammals and to the Seed of numerous Plants, R. Fosse, A. Brunel, and P. E. Thomas, 421; The Quantitative analysis of very small quantities of, at High Dilutions, R. Fosse, A. Brunel, and P. E. Thomas, 315
- Alloys, New High Permeability, G. W. Elmen, 764
- Alpine Plants, The Diurnal Course of Transpiration of Two, F. Chodat and Suzanne Kann, 126
- Alternating Current Supply, Control of Frequency of, 330



- Aluminium: Sand-castings, Unsoundness in, D. Hanson and I. G. Slater, (1), (2), 502; -Silicon Alloys, The Macro-etching of, Dr. W. Hume-Rothery, 503; The Toxic Power of, compared with that of Iron, Nickel, and other Metals, G. Bertrand and P. Serbescu, 466
- American: Astronomical Society, Prof. W. de Sitter elected an Honorary Member and W. S. Adams President of the, 634; College Sport, Current Development in, 197; Educational Progress in 1930, 420; Indian, Physical Anthropology of the, Prof. W. E. Le Gros Clark, 740; Ornithologists' Union, Elections in connexion with the, 998; Universities, Doctorates in Science conferred by, 501
- Amides, Velocities and Heats of Saponification of the, E. Calvet, 235
- Aminophenylpyrazoles, Diazotisation of, Prof. J. Reilly, B. Daly, and P. J. Drumm, 162
- Ammeter for Measuring very Minute Alternating Currents, An, P. J. Kipp and Zonen, 183
- Ammonium, Solid, Group Rotation in, and Calcium Nitrates, F. C. Kracek, S. B. Hendricks, and Dr. E. Posnjak, 410
- Amorphous Carbon, The Critical Increment of the Absorption of Hydrogen on, at 400°-520° C., Dr. F. E. T. Kingman, 272; Silica and Crystallised Quartz, The Double Refraction produced by the Compression of, and its Dispersion in the Ultra-Violet, G. Bruhat and J. Thouvenin, 1050
- Ampère, A. M., the house of, presented to the French Society of Electricians, 111
- Amulets and Superstitions, Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, 204
- Amylase, Action of Ultra-Short Electromagnetic Waves (2-3 metres) on, G. Mezzadroli and E. Varetton, 43
- Anchusa*, Cytology of, and its Relation to the Taxonomy of the Genus, S. G. Smith, 493
- Anemusite (with reference to Pacifiles of Barth), D. Beliankin, 422
- Angara, Influence of Lake Baikal on the Summer Thermic Régime of the River, G. Vereschagin, 467
- Anhydrides, Action of, upon Metals, M. Lemarchands and H. L. Roman, 163
- Animal: Aggregations: a Study in General Sociology, Prof. W. C. Allee, 940; Biology, Principles of, Prof. L. Hogben, 242; Ecology and Evolution, C. Elton, 243; Genetics, Imperial Bureau of, Bibliographies of the, 865; *Quarterly Bulletin* of the, 866; Year Book, The, Capt. C. W. Hume, 102
- Animals under Human Control, Variation of, 934
- Anisotropy due to Flow in Cellulose Sols, J. M. Preston, 796
- Annual Tables of Constants and Numerical Data for Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and Technology, 662
- Antarctic: Alcyonaria, Madreporaria, and Antipatharia, Sir J. Arthur Thomson and Miss Nita Rennet, 71; Research Expedition, The British Australian New Zealand, 79
- Anthocyanins: Constitution of, G. M. Robinson and Prof. R. Robinson, 413; Synthesis of, Robinson and others, 912
- Anthropological Bulletins* of the Zoological Survey of India, 756
- Anthropologie, Leitfaden der, Dr. K. Saller, 624
- Anthropology: and Native Administration, 86; in Nigeria, P. Amaury Talbot, 285; Training of Colonial Probationers in, Col. T. C. Hodson, 458
- Antibodies, A Theory of the Constitution of, H. Vincent, 1049
- Antimony Electrode, The, as a Means for pH Measurements, A. C. Leeman, 682
- Anti-Neuritic Vitamin, Seidell and Birekner, 229
- Anura, Vascular System of the, Abnormalities of the, Dr. C. H. O'Donoghue, 42
- Appalachians, Northern, Building of the, Prof. C. Schuchert, 227
- Apples in Storage, Nitrogen Content of, Pilling and Pearsall, 549
- Apprentices for the Engineering Trades, Selection of Skilled, E. Patricia Allen and P. Smith, 463
- Aquaria, The Sunless Keeping of, 406
- U Aquile, Variation of the Radial Velocity of, G. Tiercy, 682
- Arabia, Alarms and Excursions in, B. Thomas, 956
- Araucanos, The Eggs of, C. A. Finsterbusch, 697
- Archaeological Societies, Congress of, Address to the, Sir Charles Peers, 900
- Archaeologist, a Great, Unofficial Moments of, S. R. K. Glanville, 131
- Archaeology and Surveying in Southern Rhodesia, 500
- Arcs, Island and Mountain, Curvature of, Prof. T. Terada, 498
- Arctic: and Adjacent Regions, Some General Structural Features of the, O. Holtedahl, 125; Institute of the U.S.S.R., Bulletin of the, No. 5, 219
- Argentine Republic, The, and the Transmission of Rhythmic Time Signals, 217
- Aristotle, The Works of, Translated into English. Physica, by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, 396
- Armadas of the Sky: the Problem of Armaments, P. Murphy, 963
- Aromatic Substitution Products with Fluorine, W. D. Bancroft and J. E. Whearty, Jr., 280
- Arsenic Chloride, Action of, upon Nickel, G. Arrivaut, 82
- Art, Works of, Scientific Methods applied to the Examination and Preservation of, Conference on, 147
- Ascidians, New North and South American, Dr. W. G. Van Name, 71
- Asebotoside (Asebotine): The Constitution of, its Identity with Phlorizoside (Phlorizine), M. Bridel and Mlle. A. Kramer, 978
- AsH, The Band Spectrum of, G. E. Kimball and J. R. Bates, 969
- Asiderite Meteorite, Fall of an, in the Extreme South of Tunis, A. Lacroix, 646
- Astronomers and Observatories, New List of, Prof. P. Stroobant and others, 73
- Astronomy: A New History of, Dr. J. K. Fotheringham, 986; an Introduction, Prof. R. H. Baker, 563; for all, 615; Spherical, Text-Book on, Prof. W. M. Smart, 207; The Year's Progress in, Dr. H. L. Alden, 801
- Astrophysical Formula, An, P. Rossier, 734
- Astrophysik auf atomtheoretischer Grundlage, Prof. S. Rosseland, 615
- Atlantic: Foraminifera, J. A. Cushman, 798; South, Velocity of Deep Currents in the, G. E. R. Deacon, 267
- Atlas céleste, E. Delporte, 690
- Atmospheric: Electric Fields, Utilisation of, A. Brasch and F. Lange, 380; Large Ions, Mobilities of, R. K. Boylan, 1013; Ionisation, Prof. J. J. Nolan and Dr. P. J. Nolan, 971; Motion, Horizontal, The Energy of, Sir Napier Shaw, 226; Pollution, Prevention of, 649
- Atolls, The Formation of, 206
- Atom, Excited, Electron Exchange Phenomena in the, Prof. R. Whiddington and J. E. Roberts, 966
- Atomic: Hydrogen Occluded in Iron Nitride, Shun-ichi Satoh, 457; Synthesis and Stellar Energy, Dr. R. d'E. Atkinson, 194; Systems and Optical Activity, Spatial Arrangements of; Methods, Results, and Problems of Precise Measurements at High Temperatures; The Constitution and Structure of Ultramarines, F. M. Jaeger, 852; Weight, The Unit of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 731; Weights Deduced from Mass-Spectra, Dr. F. W. Aston, 460
- Atoms: and Molecules as Fitzgerald Oscillators, Sir C. V. Raman, 795; at Collision, On the Transfer of Energy between, O. K. Rice, 83; Wave-Mechanical Models of, H. E. White, 228
- Atropine, Action of, in Counteracting the Effects of Pituin and of Pilocarpine Injected into the Cerebral Ventricles, H. Cushing, 280
- Aurora: Polaris, Audibility of the, H. U. Sverdrup, 457; The Nature of the, Prof. J. Kaplan, 191
- Australasia: The Gasteromycetes of, G. H. Cunningham (12), 595; (13), 918
- Australia: a Female Aboriginal Skull found in the Jervois Ranges, Prof. F. Wood Jones, 440; An American Collecting Expedition to, 63; Commonwealth of: Official Year Book of the, No. 23, 1930. Prepared by C. H. Wickens. Editor: J. Stonham, 514; W. S. Watt appointed Meteorologist to the, 634; Eastern, Granites of, Prof. E. W. Skeats, 307; Need for the Protection of Mammals in, 935; Taxes on Books in, 900; Vanishing Life of, 425



- Australian: Aborigines, Food of, C. Daley, 762; Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Annual Report of the, 62; Diptera, J. R. Malloch, 595, 918; Flora and Fauna, Preservation of the, Sir James W. Barrett, 1041; Fossil King-Crabs, Two New, F. Chapman, 683; Fungi, Catalogue of, 635; National Research Council, Proposed changes in Constitution, etc., 611; Zebra-finch, Pugnacity of the, Dr. E. Hopkinson, 866
- Austria: Distribution of Declination in, at the Epoch 1930.0, A. Schedler and M. Toperczer, 43; Faraday and, Prof. K. Przibram, 351; The Sword Dances of, Dr. R. Wolfram, 823
- Auto-fretage, and the Theory of Strain, 49
- Avoleum, a Preparation made from Mammalian Liver, British Drug Houses, Ltd., 147
- Axolotl, Regeneration of the Extremities in the, under the Influence of X-Rays, E. Litchko, 127
- Azide Group, Structure of the, T. C. Sutton, 872
- Azides: Structure of the, from their Electric Dipole Moments, L. E. Sutton, 639; Structure of the, Dr. E. Bergman and W. Schütz, 1077
- Azopyrrole Blacks, A. Quilico and M. Freri (3), 595
- B. tumefaciens*, Factors exciting Increase of Vegetal Neoplasms by, V. Rivera, 806
- Babirusa of Celebes, The, 697
- Bacille Calmette-Guèrin Vaccine, The, A. S. Griffith, 145
- Bacteria, Luminous, The Combined Action of Metals and X-Rays on, E. Stern, 503
- Bacterial: Flora of Certain Fish, G. Cannicci, 735; Plant Pathogens, Manual of, Charlotte Elliott, 953
- Bacteriology in relation to Medicine, A System of. Vol. 6, J. A. Arkwright and others, 888
- Bacteriophage, The, and its Clinical Applications, Prof. F. d'Herelle. Translated by Prof. G. H. Smith, 431
- Bacterium granulosa* of Noguchi in its relations with the Etiology of Trachoma, The, C. Nicolle and U. Lombroso, 81
- Balun Bidai, I. H. N. Evans, 762
- Band Spectra, Complicated, Analysis of, with the Aid of Magnetic Rotation Spectra, Prof. R. W. Wood and G. H. Dieke, 545
- Banks Island, Melanesia, The Petrographic Character of, A. Amstutz, 734
- Barbituric Derivatives, Some Reactions of Certain, J. Bougault and J. Guillou, 770
- Baridiinæ, On (Cureculionidæ), mostly from New Guinea, A. M. Lea, 279
- Barium: Hydride, Bands in the Spectrum of, Dr. A. Schaafsma, 1042; Nitrate in Nitric Acid, The Equilibrium in Solutions of, at the Temperatures of 0° and 25°, P. I. Tolmachev, 163; Strontium and, New Isotopes of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 221
- Barley and its Wort, Nitrogen Contents of, L. R. Bishop, 308
- Bathurst Senkungsfeld, The, C. A. Sussmilch, 467
- Bathyliths, Notes on, and Some of their Implications, W. R. Browne, 806
- Bats, Three New, of the genera *Pteropus*, *Nyctimene*, and *Chearephon*, from Melanesia, E. Le G. Troughton, 387
- Bauxite in the Upper Sann Valley, Genesis of, E. Dittler and O. Kühn, 467
- Bavenda, The, Dr. H. A. Stayt, 614
- Beagle, The Voyage of the, 1831-1836, 1065, 1068
- Bedford College for Women, Opening of New Building, 14
- Beetroot, The Sapogenin of, V. Prelog, 127
- Beilstein's Handbuch der organischen Chemie, A Brief Introduction to the Use of, Prof. E. H. Huntress, 136
- Beit Fellowships for Scientific Research, Sir Campbell Stuart appointed Chairman and Sir Alfred Beit a Trustee of the; award of Fellowships to W. H. Wheeler and J. I. Armstrong, 161
- Belfast: Naturalists' Field Club, S. A. Bennett awarded the Club Medal, 757; Queen's University of, Dr. J. S. Young appointed Musgrave Professor of Pathology, 804
- Bellerophons, Carboniferous, Dr. J. Weir, 497
- Benzene: and Toluene, Raman Spectra of, L. E. Howlett, 796; into Methane, The Transformation of, A. Mailhe and Creusot, 422; Nitrobenzene and, Melting Points of, Prof. I. Masson, 726
- Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology: a Key for the Identification of Organisms of the Class Schizomycetes, D. H. Bergey, and others. Third edition, 6
- Bermuda Oceanographic Expedition, The, Dr. W. Beebe, 406
- Berne University, conferment of Honorary Doctorates on Sir Charles Sherrington and Prof. H. Cushing, 681
- Beryllium Ferrite and the Ferric Oxide arising from its Decomposition, H. Forestier and M. Galand, 978
- Betelgeux, The Variability of, B. W. Kukarkin, 764
- Bibliography of Science, Classification for, Dr. S. C. Bradford, 268
- Bichler and Napieralski, The Synthesis of, M. Decker, 467
- Biochemistry in America, 90
- Biocolloidologie, Traité de, W. Kopaczewski. Tome 1: Pratique des colloïdes. Deux. édition. Fasc. 3: Mésures capillaires et électriques, 852
- Biologischen Arbeitsmethoden, Handbuch der, Herausgegeben von Prof. E. Abderhalden: Lief. 331. Abt. 9. Teil 4, Heft 4 (Schluss), 396; Lief. 346. Abt. 9. Teil 7, Heft 1, 431
- Biology: as a Real Profession, Plea for, Dr. H. Martin Leake, 666; A Short History of, A General Introduction to the Study of Living Things, Dr. C. Singer, 132; and Civilisation, Dr. H. H. Dale, 897; Historical Aspects of, Prof. L. Hogben, 132; Progressive, Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins, 923
- Bird: Migration in Switzerland, Dr. K. Bretscher, 676; Migrants at the Rossitten, D. Yorke, 440; Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks of England, Report on, for 1930, 1071; Song and Weather, H. G. Alexander, 549
- Birds: Migration of, Dr. J. Grinnell, 329; of the Galapagos Islands, H. S. Swarth, 762; Speed of Flight of, T. H. Harrison, 586
- Birmingham University: award of Doctorates; Dr. A. S. Barnes appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine; Dr. R. H. Hopkins appointed Adrian Brown Professor of Brewing; R. D. Lockhart, Professor of Anatomy; and P. Gray and D. Richards, Resident staff Tutors of Adult Education; Prof. A. M. Carr-Saunders to be Muirhead Lecturer for another year, 80; S. Lees appointed Professor of Mechanical Engineering, 278; Ore-dressing Laboratory of the Mining Department of, Opening of the, 1068; Conferment of Honorary Degrees, 1069
- Birth Control, Ministry of Health Circular on, 298
- Birthdays and Research Centres, 41, 125, 162, 198, 234, 278, 314, 385, 420, 465, 502, 553, 594, 645, 681, 733, 768, 805, 881, 916, 976, 1012, 1049, 1085
- Bismuth, Double Sulphates of, with Alkali Metals (2), L. Malossi, 1050
- Bison, European, in the Caucasus, 633
- Bitumen of the Urganian Limestone and the Molasse of Pyrimont (Ain), The, J. J. Pittard, 734
- Black: Sea Sprat, The, L. Berg, 770; Spur Area (Healesville), Geology and Petrology of the, A. B. Edwards, 467
- Blepharoceridæ* of Japan, Sirô Kitakami, 640
- Blind, National Institute for the, Report for Year ending March 31, 1931, 868
- Blood: of Aquatic Animals, The Composition of the, and its Bearings upon the possible Conditions of Origin of the Vertebrates, Prof. W. J. Dakin, 66; Serum, The Physical Properties of the, and of the Proteins separated from this Serum by the Acetone Method, etc., C. Achard, A. Boutaric, and M. Doladilhe, 555
- Bopyrid Parasite, A New, from the Coast of N.S.W., Prof. W. J. Dakin, 595
- Boric Acid and Alumina, Separation and Estimation of, Malaprade and Schnoutka, 315
- Boron, Crystallised, L. Hackspill, A. Stieber, and R. Hocart, 1013
- Botanical: Congress, Fifth International, Cambridge, 16-23 August 1930. Report of Proceedings. Edited by F. T. Brooks and Dr. T. F. Chipp, 778; Society and Exchange Club of the British Isles, Report for 1930, 668



- Botany, The Advancement of, Prof. T. G. Hill, 538, 780  
 Bottle-Pipe Resonator, The, A. E. Bate, 270  
 Bovine Tuberculosis and the Pasteurisation of Milk, 36  
 Boys's Soap Solutions, Effect of Light on the Surface Tension of, Prof. L. D. Mahajan, 496; Dr. P. Lecomte du Noüy, 674  
 Braconid Parasite, Polyembryony in a, H. L. Parker, 190  
 Bradford Technical College, *Journal of Research* of the, 845  
 Braille Models for Teaching Electricity and Magnetism, Dr. F. W. Alexander, 698  
 Brain : and Mind, A. Lynch, 954 ; Mind, and the External Signs of Intelligence, Dr. B. Hollander, 815  
 Brandy, Alcoholic Strength of, A Formula for the Determination of the, P. Balavoine, 279  
 Brass, High-strength, The Failure of a, J. E. Newson and A. Wragg, 503  
 Bread : a Collection of Popular Papers on Wheat, Flour, and Bread, H. Snyder. With Biographical Sketch by A. L. Winton, 953  
 Breeding from Colour Varieties, J. C. Laidlay ; D. Seth-Smith, 379  
 Bretons et Anglais aux V<sup>e</sup> et VI<sup>e</sup> siècles, F. Lot, 61  
 Brewster Medal of the American Ornithologists' Union, award of the, to Mrs. F. M. Bailey, 998  
 Bridge Piers, The Profile of, A. Signorini, 43  
*Brighter Biochemistry*, No. 8, 490  
 Brinell Indentations in Cold-rolled Metal, The Diameter Measurement of Certain, H. O'Neill, 595  
 Britain and World Trade : Quo Vadimus and other Economic Essays, A. Loveday, 955  
 British : Association : Centenary Meeting of the, Programmes of Sections, 230 ; The Faraday and, Centenaries, 328 ; Centenary Meeting, The, 483 ; Centenary Celebration at Liverpool, 520 ; Centenary Meeting, Presidential Address, 521 ; Summaries of Addresses of Presidents of Sections, 530-540 ; Commemorative Service at Liverpool Cathedral, 572 ; Sectional Meetings and Discussions, 573 ; Sir Alfred Ewing elected President of Meeting for 1932, 575 ; a Retrospect, 1831-1931, O. J. R. Howarth. Centenary (second) Edition, 687 ; London and the, 687 ; Side-lights on the, 982 ; Australian New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition, The, 79 ; of, Commercial Seed Analysts, Annual Meeting of the, 265 ; *Birds*, August, 332 ; Chemical Industry, A History of the, Dr. S. Miall, 45 ; Coal Trade, Influence of Modern Hydro-Electric Power Development on the, Dr. Brysson Cunningham, 397 ; Coleopterous Fauna, Additions to the, H. St. J. Donisthorpe, 155 ; Douglas Fir, Timber of the, B. J. Rendle, 971 ; Empire Cancer Campaign : Eighth Annual Report, 664 ; Gift to the, by Sir William A. Morris, 440 ; Engineering Standards Association, Reorganisation of the, 997 ; Institute of Philosophy, Sir Herbert Samuel elected President of the, 64 ; Mineral Collectors and Dealers in the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries, A. Russell, 42 ; Museum : Lord Ilchester and Prof. J. Stanley Gardiner elected Trustees of the, 299 ; (Natural History) : Acquisitions by the, 15, 181 ; the Diptera of Patagonia and South Chile, 407 ; Fiftieth Anniversary of the Opening of the, 578 ; Post-cards of British Trees, 671 ; Acquisitions by the, 755, 935 ; Optical Instruments, Exhibition of, 500 ; Patent System, Reform of the, 165 ; School of Archaeology : in Athens, Report of the, 934 ; in Palestine, Work of the, Miss D. A. E. Garrod, 297 ; *Wood Preserving Association, Journal of the*, No. 1, 903  
 Broadcasting : Educational, Prof. Winifred Cullis, 877 ; Studios, Acoustical Problems of, N. Ashbridge, 844 ; the Song of the Nightingale, 217  
 Bromine in Organic Compounds, Estimation of, Prof. F. Schultz, 72  
 Bronze, The Metallurgy of, H. C. Dews, 627  
 Browne, Buckston, Farm for Surgical Research, Foundation-stone laid of the, 101  
 Brunton's, Guy, Expedition to Middle Egypt, Exhibition of the Finds of, 63  
 Budgerigars, The Breeding of, 60  
 Budget, Reductions under the, 487  
 Buenos Aires, Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Reorganisation of the, 903  
*Building Science Abstracts*, 936  
 Bull, The Cult of the, in Scotland, A. D. Lacaille, 874  
 Bunsen Society in Vienna, The German, Prof. F. Paneth, translated by Dr. R. W. Lawson, 94  
 Burroughs, John, The Slabslides Book of, 834  
 Bushman, A Fossil, found in the Zuurberg Mountains, South Africa, F. W. FitzSimons, 611  
 Cable and Wireless Communications of the World, The, F. J. Brown. Second edition, 1057  
 Cables : High-voltage, Improved Method of constructing, M. Hochstadter, W. Vogel, and E. Bowden, 933 ; Steel-cored Aluminium, E. T. Painton, 1070  
 Caird, Sir James, Travelling Scholarships, award of the, 81  
 Calcium : Fluoride Method for the Determination of Fluoride, The, S. G. Clarke and W. N. Bradshaw, 1086 ; Triphosphate in a Soluble Form, A New Method for getting, P. Jolibois and G. Chaudron, 315  
 Calculus : Advanced, a Sequel to an Elementary Treatise on the Calculus, late Prof. G. A. Gibson, 851 ; Upwards and Downwards in the, 851  
 Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine, etc., Annual Report of the, 148  
 Calendar Reform, 38, 800 ; C. C. Wylie, 841  
 California Academy of Sciences, Report of Museum and Aquarium for 1930, 331  
*Calliphora ochracea* Schiner (Diptera, Calliphoridae), The Life-history of, Mary E. Fuller, 280  
 'Calorex' Glass, Tests with, Chance Bros. and Co., Ltd., 277  
 Cambridge : Philosophical Society, election of Officers, 834 ; University : Dr. C. E. Tilley elected Professor of Mineralogy and Petrology, 41 ; award of the Harkness Scholarship to Miss F. E. S. Caldwell and of Frank Smart prizes to P. W. Richards and P. Ulyett, 80 ; D. Keilin elected Quick Professor of Biology ; W. J. Heasman appointed Senior Curator and G. J. Kerrich Junior Curator of the Museum of Zoology ; E. E. Pochin elected Michael Foster Research Student in Physiology, 161 ; resignation of Dr. A. Harker ; Dr. F. R. Winton appointed University Lecturer in Physiology ; Dr. G. E. Holmes University Lecturer in Pharmacology, 420 ; Dr. T. W. Wormell reappointed Observer in Meteorological Physics ; Dissertations approved for Degrees, 420 ; award of Research Exhibitions, 501 ; election of Prof. G. H. Hardy, L. C. Young, and H. S. M. Coxeter to Fellowships at Trinity College ; A. H. Chapman appointed Official Secretary to the Engineering Department ; Sir R. H. Biffen given the title of Professor Emeritus, 732 ; Gift from the Goldsmiths Company ; J. W. A. F. Balfour-Browne elected a Frank Smart Student in Zoology ; G. Bateson and R. O. Redman elected Fellows of St. John's College, 768 ; A. G. Brighton appointed Curator of the Sedgwick Museum of Geology ; Prof. C. E. Tilley elected a Fellow of Emmanuel College ; V. V. Narlikar elected an Isaac Newton Student and H. R. Hulme an additional Isaac Newton Student, 804 ; A. E. Watkins appointed University Lecturer in Cytology, Dr. E. J. Maskell University Lecturer in Plant Physiology, W. J. Dowson University Lecturer in Mycology, G. C. Grindlay University Demonstrator in Experimental Psychology, and E. H. B. Boulton reappointed University Lecturer in Forestry ; H. R. Barnell appointed Frank Smart Student in Botany, 844 ; R. J. Pumphrey appointed University Demonstrator in Zoology ; Grant to L. C. Beadle from the Balfour Fund, 880 ; Prof. A. Einstein appointed Rouse Ball Lecturer for 1931-32 ; Prof. D. Keilin elected a Fellow of Magdalene College ; Dr. C. G. Lamb reappointed Reader in Electrical Engineering, and T. R. B. Saunders University Demonstrator in Engineering, 916 ; Dr. H. C. Darby appointed University Lecturer in Geography ; recommended Recognition of certain Sub-departments, 1011 ; Dr. F. C. Phillips appointed University Lecturer in Petrology ; recommendation of the General Board concerning Forestry in the University Curriculum, 1048



- Canada: Goose, The, and its Races, H. A. Taverner, 874; North-West Territories of, Development of the Hudson Bay Region and the, Dr. Brysson Cunningham, 53; Royal Society of, Annual Meeting in Toronto, 275
- Canal Rays, The Production of High-speed, without the Use of High Voltages, E. O. Lawrence and D. H. Sloan, 83
- Cancer: A Method of Diagnosis of, Dr. Bendien, 438; and Scientific Research, Dr. Barbara Holmes, 136; Ministry of Health Memorandum on, 65; Research: 664; and the Scientific Method, Dr. Ellice McDonald, 407; Fund, Imperial, Report of the, 931
- Canning Industry, English, Progress of the, 16
- Cape Observatory, Report of the, 73
- Capper Award, Dr. L. O. Howard recipient of the, 64
- Caramel, The Analytical Characters of, regarded as a Colouring Matter for Food, P. Balavoine, 83
- Carbon: Contacts, C. Turnbull; Prof. C. V. Boys, 968; Dioxide in Sea-water of Different Salt Contents, Apparent Dissociation Constants of, Dr. K. Buch, Dr. H. Wattenberg, and H. W. Harvey, 411; Disulphide: Change of Density of, with Temperature, Dr. J. Mazur, 673; Change of the Dielectric Constant of, with Temperature, Dr. J. Mazur, 761; Change of Dielectric Polarisation of, with Temperature, Prof. M. Wolfke and Dr. J. Mazur, 871; Flames, Spectrum of, Prof. A. Fowler and W. M. Vaidya, 192
- Carbonaceous Minerals, The Classification of, Prof. H. Briggs, 72
- Carboniferous Plants from Sinai, Prof. A. C. Seward, 1012
- Carbonisation Test, Low Temperature, 841
- Carbonyl Sulphide, Infra-red Absorption Spectrum of, C. R. Bailey and A. B. D. Cassie, 637
- Carnegie: Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Annual Report, 880; United Kingdom Trust, The, 194
- Carotene: and Vitamin A, Mlle. D. van Stolk, J. Guilbert, and H. Pénau, 467; Cause of the Transformation of, into Vitamin A, H. S. Olcott and D. C. McCann, 998; Pure, and Vitamin A, Mlle. D. van Stolk, J. Guilbert, H. Pénau, and H. Simonnet, 199; The Hæmatopoietic Power of, L. Binet and M. V. Strumza, 387; The Isolation of, from the Suprarenal Glands, O. Bailly and R. Netter, 1086
- Carpenter, Edward, an Appreciation, Edited by G. Beith, 892
- Catalytic Dehydrogenation, in the Gas Phase, of the Fatty Alcohols in the Presence of Pumice carrying Sulphuric and Phosphoric Acids, J. B. Senderens, 162
- Cathode Phenomena in the Glow Discharge, Prof. A. Güntherschulze and F. Keller, 840
- Caucasus to the Volga, Through the, Dr. F. Nansen. Translated by G. C. Wheeler, 319
- Cavendish, Henry, 1731-1810, 608
- Ce<sup>+++</sup> Ion in Solution, Absorption Spectra of the, Prof. D. M. Bose and S. Datta, 270
- Cellular Permeability: M. V. L. Homes, 1005; Action of Light upon, F. Chodat, 126
- Cellulose: Lacquers, Dr. T. H. Durrans, 192; Sols, Anisotropy due to Flow in, J. M. Preston, 796
- Central: America, Models of Temples in, Dr. G. C. Vaillant, 823; Asiatic Expeditions. The Permian of Mongolia: a Report on the Permian Fauna of the Jisu Honguer Limestone of Mongolia and its relations to the Permian of other parts of the World, Prof. A. W. Grabau. With a Chapter on the Relations of the Jisu Honguer Formation to the General Geology of Mongolia, by Dr. C. P. Berkey and F. K. Morris, 956; Australian Parrot, Strange acquirement of a, A. W. Mullen, 579
- Cercariae, Excretory System in, The Evolution of the, Lieut.-Col. R. B. S. Sewell, 459
- Cerebro-Spinal Fever, Certain Aspects of the Control of, 332
- Cerium, Pure, Preparation of, M. Billy and F. Trombe, 734
- Ceylon, Flora of, A Hand-Book to the, H. Trimen. Part 6: Supplement, A. H. G. Alston, 891
- Chamaeleon, A Dwarf, with Two Litters, W. J. Pitt, 407
- Changing World, The, 404
- Charcoal: Activated, Hydrolytic Adsorption of, Prof. J. N. Mukherjee and S. P. Roychoudhury, 412; Activation by, W. D. Bancroft and S. F. Whearty, Jr., 280
- Chastity: The Girdle of, a Medico-Historical Study, Dr. E. J. Dingwall, 628
- Chelonia, Evolution in the, P. E. P. Deraniyagala, 273
- Chemical: Analysis of Special Steels, Steel-making Alloys, their Ores, Graphites, and Bearing Metals, Rapid Methods for the, C. M. Johnson. Fourth edition, 288; Composition: an Account of the Methods by which Atomic Weights and Molecular Formulae have been determined, Dr. A. K. Goard, 958; Engineer, The, 622; Engineering, Elements of, Prof. W. L. Badger and Prof. W. L. McCabe, 622; Engineers, Institution of, H. W. Cremer appointed Honorary Secretary of the, 756; Forces, Nature of, 948; Industries, Safety Work in, 1; Industry: A History of the British, Dr. S. Miall, 45; Society of, Jubilee Celebrations of the: Dr. H. F. Gilibe, 157; Prof. G. T. Morgan, 226; Manipulation, Faraday's, Sir Robert Robertson and B. A. Ellis, 371
- Chemie: anorganischen, Handbuch der, Herausgegeben von Prof. R. Abegg, Dr. F. Auerbach, and Prof. I. Koppel. Band 4, Abt. 3. Teil 2. A Lief. 1, 625; physikalischen, Lehrbuch der, Prof. K. Jellinek: Fünf Bände. Band 3: Die Lehre von der Statik chemischer Reaktionen in verdünnten Mischungen (Lösungen). Erste und zweite Auflage. Lief. 9, 852; Fünf Bände. Lief. 10 (Band 4): Die Lehre von der Statik chemischer Reaktionen (Schlussteil) und die Lehre von der chemischen Kinetik. Erste und zweite Auflage, 958
- Chemische: Bindung als elektrostatische Erscheinung, A. E. van Arkel and J. H. de Boer. Deutsche, von den Verfassern autorisierte Ausgabe von L. Klemm und W. Klemm, 816; Thermodynamik: Einführung in die Lehre von den chemischen Affinitäten und Gleichgewichten, Prof. H. Ulich, 52
- Chemistry: Analytical, Recent Advances in, Vol 1: Organic Chemistry, Editor: Dr. C. Ainsworth Mitchell, 208; and Industry, Special Number, 101; Applied, in Technical Colleges, 678; for Matriculation, Dr. G. H. Bailey and H. W. Bausor. Third edition, 173; Inorganic: and Theoretical, A Comprehensive Treatise on, Dr. J. W. Mellor. Vol. 11, 957; Systematic, from the Standpoint of the Periodic Law, Prof. R. M. Caven and Dr. G. D. Lander. New edition, 209; in Technical Schools and Colleges in England and Wales, Instruction in, 678; Makers of, Dr. E. J. Holmyard, 321; of the Vitamins, Sir F. Gowland Hopkins and others, 842; Organic: An Introduction to, Prof. J. Read, 742; for Medical, Intermediate Science, and Pharmaceutical Students, Prof. A. K. Macbeth. Second edition, 657; Fundamentals of, Prof. H. F. Lewis, 957; Physical: A Textbook of Practical, Prof. K. Fajans and K. Wüst. Translated by B. Topley, 852; A Treatise on, a Co-operative Effort by a Group of Physical Chemists, Edited by Prof. Hugh S. Taylor. Second edition. In 2 volumes; Prof. C. K. Rideal, 429; and Colloidal, 852; Laboratory Technique in, 814; Practical, Prof. A. Findlay. Fifth edition, 959; Physiological, in the United States, The Development of, Prof. R. H. Chittenden, 90; Quantitative Pharmaceutical, containing Theory and Practice of Quantitative Analysis applied to Pharmacy, Prof. G. L. Jenkins and Prof. A. G. DuMez, 958; Synthetic Inorganic, a Course of Laboratory and Classroom Study for First Year College Students, Prof. A. A. Blanchard and Prof. J. W. Phelan. Fourth edition, 92; through the Ages, Prof. J. Read, 321
- Cheshunt Experimental and Research Station, Report for 1931, 1071
- Children, Young: Intellectual Growth in, Dr. Susan Isaacs. With an Appendix on Children's "Why" Questions, by Nathan Isaacs, 777; The Behaviour of, Jean Ayling, 777
- Chimie, l'Union Internationale de, Dixième Conférence de, Liège, 14-20 septembre 1930. Rapports sur les hydrates de carbone (glucides), 656
- China: National Medical Journal of, Aug.-Oct., 998; Nationalism and Science in, 469; Sir James Barrett, 1035



- Chinese : Alchemist, A. Prof. J. Read, 509 ; Alchemy, Prof. J. R. Partington, 1074 ; Turkestan, Archaeological and Geographical Exploration in, Reason for Abandonment of, Sir Aurel Stein, 144
- Chlorides in Dairy Products and Biological Material, Determination of, W. L. Davies, 733
- Chloro-tropane, Some Physiological Effects of, M. Polonovski and R. Hazard, 734
- Choosing a Career, Methods of, F. M. Earle and others. Edited with a Preface by Dr. C. S. Myers, 393
- Christianity, A Heathen's Thoughts on, E. Upasaka, 892
- Chromosome Homologies in Wheat, Rye, and Aegilops, Prof. W. P. Thompson, 640
- Chromosomes and Constitution, A. A. Moffett, 875
- Chromosphere, Height of the, in 1930, G. Abetti, 1014
- Chronic Deafness, Treatment of, by the Electro-phonoide Method of Zünd-Burguet, Dr. G. C. Cathcart. Second edition, 563
- Chrysanthemum* and *Potentilla*, Chromosome Multiples in, N. Shimotomai, 72
- Cinematograph, An Ultra-rapid, giving from 2000 to 3000 Images per second, E. Huguenard and A. Magnan, 163
- Citrus Growing in Southern Rhodesia, 60
- City and Guilds of London Institute, Report for 1930, 501
- Civil : Engineering Design, A. A. Fordham, 962 ; Engineers, Institution of, awards of the, 834 ; Service, The Royal Commission on the, 201
- Civilisation : Biology and, Dr. H. H. Dale, 897 ; The Epic and the Tragedies of, Sir Arnold Wilson, 902
- Climatology, A. A. Miller, 514
- Clinique-Manufacture Internationale, La, Dr. Rollier, 1072
- Clockmakers' Company, Three-hundredth Anniversary of the, 1032
- Clocks, Electric Pendulum, Prof. C. V. Boys, 651
- Coagulation, Reversible, in Living Tissue (2), W. D. Bancroft and J. E. Rutzler, Jr., 280
- Coal : and its Uses, R. Wigginton, 1024 ; Dust, Electrification of, S. C. Blackin and H. Robinson, 498 ; Resources, National, The Physical and Chemical Survey of, 490
- Cobalt Nitrosodithiocarbamates, L. Cambi and A. Gagnasso, 683
- Cochita, New Mexico, Folk-Tales of the, Ruth Benedict, 970
- Cockle, Growth of the, A. C. Stephen, 379
- Cockroach, Temperature and Humidity Relations of the, D. L. Gunn, 186
- Coco-nut Oil Industry, The, A. E. Williams, 755
- Cod, The Greenland, 731
- Cohesion, The Nature of, Prof. J. E. Lennard-Jones, 462, 763
- Coil Ignition Systems for Motor Cars, E. A. Watson, 865
- Cold : -blooded Animals, On the Metabolism of, Daphne L. Coulston, 316 ; Common, Cause of the, Dochez, Mills, and Kneeland, Jr., 438
- Colloidal : (Explosive) Powders, Temperature of Deflagration of, A. Michel-Lévy and H. Muraour, 421 ; Gold, Magnetism of, V. I. Vaidhianathan and Balwant Singh, 302 ; Humic-mineral Complexes, Behaviour in an Electric Field of, C. Antoniani, 735 ; State, Diamagnetism and the, S. Ramachandra Rao, 153
- Colloids : a Textbook, Prof. H. R. Kruyt. Translated by Prof. H. S. van Klooster. Second edition, 852 ; Coagulation of, by Electrolytes, Dr. B. N. Desai and P. M. Barve, 907
- Colonial Office appointments, 112, 266, 670, 834, 998
- Colorado : and Folsom Points, Dr. E. B. Renaud, 190 ; University, Theses presented to, 384
- Colour Vision, Young's Theory of, Sir John H. Parsons, 123
- Colours, Which, do all Colour-blind People fail to distinguish ? Polack, 1050
- Combustion, The Heat of, of Certain Organic Halogenic Compounds, I. Kaklukov and F. Perelmann, 127
- Comet : New, 1931 b, 192 ; New Bright, 1931 c, 308 ; New, 841 ; Notes, Prof. G. van Biesbroeck, 416 ; Ryves, 1931 c, 381
- Cometary : Observation by Bessel in 1832, A Possible, 121 ; Orbits and the Orbit of Pluto, Proximities of, G. Fayet, 163
- Comets, 308, 876
- Comets of Short Period, The Origin of, S. Vsesviatsky, 1045
- Comma Butterfly in England, The, Dr. F. S. Dawe ; N. D. Riley, 760 ; F. Tutin, 1041
- Communications, Sir Oliver Lodge, 932
- Conduits, Leçons sur les, Prof. C. Camichel, 209
- Conejo, Explotación del, en la Argentina, 112
- Congress, Washington, Report of the Librarian of, 219
- Coniferous Plantation, The Artificial, and its Place in Forestry, E. P. Turner, 417
- Constantan Wire, Lattice-distortion of Cold-drawn, W. A. Wood, 917
- Contraceptive Advice, Bureau for, Statistical Report on Operations of the, Prof. R. Pearl, 180
- Contraceptives, Chemical, Spermicidal Power of, J. R. Baker, 119
- Co-operation between Scientific and Technical Societies and Institutions, Association for the Promotion of, Annual General Meeting, 996
- Coopers Hill War Memorial Prize and Medal, award of the, to Dr. M. G. Say, 1072
- Co-ordination, An Aspect of, Prof. J. Kenner, 1000
- Copepod, A New Parasitic, Isokiti Harada, 37
- Copper : Alloys, Oxidation of Some, J. S. Dunn, 594 ; and Copper-rich Alloys in the Form of Thin Strip, Physical Testing of, M. Cook and E. C. Larke, 554 ; Brittleness in, C. Blazey, 594 ; Ion, Activity Coefficient of the Bivalent, in Solutions of its Sulphate, Mlle. M. Quintin, 1050 ; -magnesium Alloys, The, W. R. D. Jones (4), 595 ; on Bismuth, Orientated Deposits of, Prof. Yosimiti Hori, 412 ; The Work-hardening Capacity and Elongation Properties of, H. O'Neill and J. W. Cuthbertson, 595
- Coral Reefs and Atolls : being a Course of Lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute at Boston, February 1930, Prof. J. Stanley Gardiner, 206
- Corals : and Zooxanthellæ, The Significance of the Relationship between, Dr. C. M. Yonge, 309 ; Symbiotic Algæ of, Capt. A. K. Totton ; Dr. C. M. Yonge, 760
- Corea, The Wolf of, Yoshio Abe, 71
- Cornbrash, The Stratigraphical Distribution of the, J. A. Douglas and W. J. Arkell (2), 125
- Cornish Geology, Handbook of, E. H. Davison. Second edition, 779
- Corn-snake, A North American, and Moles, D. Butler, 579
- Corona, Changes of the, in the Sunspot Cycle, Dr. W. J. S. Lockyer, 229

CORRESPONDENCE.

- Abaxas*, Effect of Certain Substances and of Heat on Cells of, Prof. J. B. Gatenby and Joyce C. Hill, 31
- Acetylene, The Slow Combustion of, R. Spence, 153
- Acromegaly : among the old Northmen, Prof. C. G. Seligman, 221 ; Prof. L. Hogben, 375 ; in the Far North, Dr. M. Perkins, 491 ; Prof. C. G. Seligman, 492
- Active Nitrogen, An Oxidisable, Dr. E. J. B. Willey and S. G. Foord, 493
- Adsorption, Activated, Prof. W. E. Garner, 583
- Aerosols : Charged, and Ball Lightning, W. C. Reynolds, 584 ; Highly Charged, A Curious Phenomenon shown by, W. Cawood and H. S. Patterson, 150 ; Properties of, S. C. Blacktin, 968
- African Prehistory, *Homo sapiens* and, E. J. Wayland, 1003
- Agar-liquefying Bacteria, Distribution of, H. Nicol, 1041
- Air Currents : Control of Humidity of, Dr. P. A. Buxton ; Dr. W. H. J. Vernon and L. Whitby, 837 ; of Different Humidities, A Method of obtaining, Prof. J. B. Seth, 638
- Aitken Condensation Nuclei, A. R. Hogg, 908
- Alchemical Apparatus, Prof. J. R. Partington, 118
- "All or None" : a Question of Nomenclature, W. W. Waller, 70
- Ammonium, Solid, Group Rotation in, and Calcium Nitrates, F. C. Kracek, S. B. Hendricks, and Dr. E. Posnjak, 410
- Anchusa*, Cytology of, and its relation to the Taxonomy of the Genus, S. G. Smith, 493
- Anisotropy due to Flow in Cellulose Sols, J. M. Preston, 796
- Anthocyanins, Constitution of, G. M. Robinson and Prof. R. Robinson, 413
- Anthropology, Training of Colonial Probationers in, Col. T. C. Hodson, 458



- AsH, The Band Spectrum of, G. E. Kimball and J. R. Bates, 969
- Atmospheric Motion, Horizontal, The Energy of, Sir Napier Shaw, 226
- Atoms and Molecules as Fitzgerald Oscillators, Sir C. V. Raman, 795
- Aurora Polaris, Audibility of the, H. U. Sverdrup, 457
- Australian Flora and Fauna, Preservation of the, Sir James W. Barrett, 1041
- Azide Group, Structure of the, T. C. Sutton, 872
- Azides, Structure of the: from their Electric Dipole Moments, L. E. Sutton, 639; Dr. E. Bergmann and W. Schütz, 1077
- Band Spectra, Analysis of Complicated, with the Aid of Magnetic Rotation Spectra, Prof. R. W. Wood and G. H. Dieke, 545
- Barium: Hydride, Bands in the Spectrum of, Dr. A. Schaafsma, 1042; Strontium and, New Isotopes of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 221
- Benzene: and Toluene, Raman Spectra of, L. E. Howlett, 796; Melting Points of Nitrobenzene and of, Prof. I. Masson, 726
- Bibliography of Science, Classification for, Dr. S. C. Bradford, 268
- Black Stem Rust of Wheat, *Puccinia graminis tritici*, Effect of Light on Urediniospores of, W. A. R. Dillon Weston, 67
- Blood of Aquatic Animals, The Composition of the, and its bearings upon the Possible Conditions of Origin of the Vertebrates, Prof. W. J. Dakin, 66
- Bottle-Pipe Resonator, The, A. E. Bate, 270
- Boys's Soap Solutions, Effect of Light on the Surface Tension of, Prof. L. D. Mahajan, 496; Dr. P. Lecomte du Noüy, 674
- Carbon: Contacts, C. Turnbull; Prof. C. V. Boys, 968; Dioxide in Sea-Water of different Salt Contents, Apparent Dissociation Constants of, Dr. K. Buch, Dr. H. Wattenberg, and H. W. Harvey, 411; Disulphide: Change of Density of, with Temperature, Dr. J. Mazur, 673; Change of the Dielectric Constant of, with Temperature, Dr. J. Mazur, 761; Prof. M. Wolfke and Dr. J. Mazur, 871
- Carbonyl Sulphide, Infra-Red Absorption Spectrum of, C. R. Bailey and A. B. D. Cassie, 637
- Ce<sup>+++</sup> Ion in Solution, Absorption Spectra of the, Prof. D. M. Bose and S. Datta, 270
- Cellulose Sols, Anisotropy due to Flow in, J. M. Preston, 796
- Charcoal, Activated, Hydrolytic Adsorption of, Prof. J. N. Mukherjee and S. P. Roychoudhury, 412
- Chemical Industry, Society of, Jubilee Celebrations of the, Prof. G. T. Morgan, 226
- Chinese Alchemy, Prof. J. R. Partington, 1074
- Cockroach, Temperature and Humidity Relations of the, D. L. Gunn, 186
- Colloidal State, Diamagnetism and the, S. Ramachandra Rao, 153
- Colloids, Coagulation of, by Electrolytes, Dr. B. N. Desai and P. M. Barve, 907
- Comma Butterfly in England, The, Dr. F. Sherwill Dawe; N. D. Riley, 760; F. Tutin, 1041
- Co-ordination, An Aspect of, Prof. J. Kenner, 1000
- Copper on Bismuth, Orientated Deposits of, Prof. Y. Hori, 412
- Corals, Symbiotic Algæ of, Capt. A. K. Totton; Dr. C. M. Yonge, 760
- Corpuscular Rays, Penetrating, coming from Inclined Directions, Measurements on the Absorption of the, Prof. B. Rossi, 408
- Cosmic: and  $\gamma$ -Radiation, Biological Effects of, Prof. J. H. Orton and S. T. Burfield, 376; Evolution and Earthly Needs, Prof. H. E. Armstrong, 761; Rays: and Gamma Rays, Similarity between, Prof. R. A. Millikan and Dr. I. S. Bowen, 582; Magnetic Experiments on the, Prof. B. Rossi, 300; The Corpuscular Explanation of, Prof. F. Soddy, 408
- Cotton Growing in Egypt, N. W. Barritt, 1001; F. P. Slater, 1002
- Crystal Structure, Representation of, Prof. E. B. Bailey, 869
- Crystals, Absorption Spectra of, at Low Temperatures as references in the Measurement of Stellar Velocities, S. Freed, 33
- Cyanogen and the Cyanogen Halides, Ultra-Violet Absorption Spectra of, R. B. Mooney and H. G. Reid, 271
- Daylight, Actinic Value of, Records of, G. J. Gibbs, 35
- Deep Currents in the South Atlantic, Velocity of, G. E. R. Deacon, 267
- Diamagnetism: and the Colloidal State, S. Ramachandra Rao, 153; of Liquid Mixtures, V. C. G. Trew and Prof. J. F. Spencer, 152
- Doppler Effect in Light-Scattering, Sir C. V. Raman, 636
- Dulcitol in a Red Seaweed, Occurrence of, Dr. P. Haas and Prof. T. G. Hill, 378
- 'Dust Devils', Rotation of, J. Durward, 412
- Earthquakes, Deep-Focus, Rev. V. C. Stechschulte, 673
- Eclipse Plumage in the Mallard, Violet K. Tallent, 672
- Electric Circuit Breaker Research, E. B. Wedmore, A. M. Cassie, and W. B. Whitney, 675
- Electrical: Conductivity of Quartz, Anomalous Variation of the, with Temperature at the Transformation Point, Prof. H. Saegusa and S. Shimizu, 835; Resistance and Energy of Magnetisation, A New Relation between, Prof. W. Gerlach and E. Englert, 151
- Electricity Liberated during the Downgrade Reactions of Organic Compounds, Measurement of the, J. H. Wolfenden, 69
- Electron: Diffraction Patterns, A Focusing Method for Producing, Dr. A. A. Lebedeff, 491; Exchange Phenomena in the Excited Atom, Prof. R. Whiddington and J. E. Roberts, 966
- Electrons, Polarisation of a Beam of, by Scattering, E. G. Dymond, 149; N. F. Mott, 454
- Embryology and the Theory of Polyhedra, Prof. D'Arcy W. Thompson, 31
- Enzyme-Substrate Reactions, Contraction Constants of, M. Sreenivasaya and H. B. Sreerangachar, 585
- Esperanto in Scientific Literature, R. M. Morris-Owen, 969
- Ethane, Methane and, The Slow Combustion of, Prof. W. A. Bone, 188; Dr. E. Mardles, 304
- Ethyl Thio-aceto-acetate, Synthesis of, Sir P. C. Rây, 189
- Eurytemora thompsoni*, A. Willey: a New European Record, A. G. Lowndes, 967
- Ewing's Model of the Magnetic Atom, The Specific Heat of Ferromagnetics and, Dr. J. R. Ashworth, 1003
- Eyes, Mineral Contents of, H. Ramage and J. H. Sheldon, 376
- Fæcal Pellets, The Form of, and Specific Identification, Prof. R. Macdonald, 68
- Ferromagnetics, The Specific Heat of, and Ewing's Model of the Magnetic Atom, Dr. J. R. Ashworth, 1003
- Fitzgerald Oscillators, Atoms and Molecules as, Sir C. V. Raman, 795
- Flack, Martin, Group-Capt., Sir Leonard Hill, 496
- Flint, The Age of, M. Burton, 32
- Flower Colour, Chemical Effect of a Mendelian Factor for, Hon. Mrs. M. W. Onslow, 373
- Fluorescence: and Free Neutral Radicals, A Connexion between, Dr. W. A. Waters, 905; Mercury Line Spectrum in, Lord Rayleigh, 905
- Fluorine: The Atomic Weight of, H. S. Patterson, Prof. R. Whytlaw-Gray, and W. Cawood, 375; Prof. E. Moles, 966; The Heat of Dissociation of, Manohar S. Desai, 34
- Forestry: Practice and Research, A. C. Forbes, 31; Research in Great Britain, F. T. Brooks; J. Ramsbottom, 118
- Free Neutral Radicals, A Connexion between Fluorescence and, Dr. W. A. Waters, 905
- Gamma Rays, Cosmic Rays and, Similarity between, Prof. R. A. Millikan and Dr. I. S. Bowen, 582
- Gammarus chevreuxi* Sexton, A New Locality for, F. T. K. Pentelow, 797
- 'Gapes' in Chickens, The Treatment of, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins, 585
- Gas Reactions, Heterogeneous, Absolute Rates of, B. Topley, 115
- Gaseous Explosions, Limits of, M. Neumann and A. Serbinoff, 1040
- Geiger: Counter, A Counting Device for use with the, Dr. J. C. Jacobsen, 674; Counters, Coincidences between, A Method of Recording, Dr. J. C. Jacobsen, 185
- Gelatine, Soluble Substances in, Condition of Sparingly, Dr. T. R. Bolam, 222; Dr. S. C. Bradford; Dr. B. N. Desai, 223



- Glow-worm, Spectrum of, Dr. L. A. Ramdas and L. P. Venkiteshwaran, 726
- Glow-worms, Light of, Dr. M. Perkins, 905
- Glucuronic Acid, The Pyranoid Structure of, and of Theophylline Arabinoside, J. Pryde and R. T. Williams, 187
- Gold, Colloidal, Magnetism of, Dr. V. I. Vaidhianathan and Balwant Singh, 302
- Gravels in the New Forest Area, Age of certain, M. C. Burkitt, 222; H. Bury, 377; H. J. E. Peake, 378
- Gravity Anomalies, Major E. A. Glennie, 1004
- Green Auroral Line, Excitation of the, Prof. J. Kaplan, 304
- Hail Storm, June 14, at Doncaster, N. L. Silvester, 35
- Harvard Museum Expedition to Australia, The, Prof. J. Stanley Gardiner, 457
- Helix aspersa*, the Common Snail, Outgrowths from Pieces of, Prof. J. B. Gatenby, 1002
- High Resistance, A Spark Method of Measuring, J. A. C. Teegan, 585
- Homo sapiens* and African Prehistory, E. J. Wayland, 1003
- Humidity in the Upper Air, Graphical Indication of, Dr. C. W. B. Normand, 583
- Hydrocarbons : Slow Combustion of, Dr. R. Spence, 873; The Peroxidation of, during Combustion in Air, Dr. E. Mardles, 116
- Hydrogen : Activated Adsorption of, by Zinc and Chromium Oxides, Prof. H. S. Taylor, 636; Atomic, occluded in Iron Nitride, Shun-Ichi Satoh, 457; Influence of, on Chemical Changes in Silver Vessels, Prof. M. W. Travers, L. E. Hockin, and T. J. P. Pearce, 66; Resonance Spectrum of, Dr. K. R. Rao and J. S. Badami, 585; Sulphide and Sulphur Dioxide, Reaction between, Prof. Basur Sanjiva Rao and M. R. Aswathnarayana Rao, 413; The Critical Increment of the Adsorption of, on Amorphous Carbon at 400°-520° C., F. E. T. Kingman, 272
- Hyperfine Structure, Isotopic Displacement in, J. H. Bartlett, Jr., 408
- Immunity Reactions, The Study of Specific Combination in, J. R. Marrack and F. Campbell Smith, 1077
- Indium and Thallium, Arc Spectra of, Fine Structure in the, Dr. A. L. Narayan, 675
- Infra-Red Radiation from an Engine, An Investigation of, S. Steele, 185
- Insect Metamorphosis, Effects of Inadequate Feeding on, C. Dover, 303; Dr. Hem Singh Pruthi, 869
- Ions, Negative, Photoelectrons and, Dr. J. L. Hamshere, 871
- Isotopes of Lead, Nuclear Moments of the : Relative Values of the  $g(I)$  Factors of Pb(207) and Tl, Prof. J. C. McLennan, M. F. Crawford, and L. B. Leppard, 301
- Jumping Negative Glow, The, W. A. Leyshon, 795
- Keratin Molecule, Constitution of the, J. B. Speakman and Mercia C. Hirst, 1073
- 'Lapides palmati' mentioned in the "Historia Naturalis" of the Elder Pliny, The, Dr. K. C. Bailey, 672
- Lavoisier, Priestley and, Sir Philip Hartog, 797
- Lead, Isotopes of, Nuclear Moments of the : Relative Values of the  $g(I)$  Factors of Pb(207) and Tl, Prof. J. C. McLennan, M. F. Crawford, and L. B. Leppard, 301
- Lepidosiren*, The Double Lateral Line of, J. T. Cunningham, 377
- Light Quanta : Spin of, Sir C. V. Raman and S. Bhagavantam, 727; The Angular Momentum of, Sir C. V. Raman, 545; The penetration of, through Successive Layers of Tissue Paper, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins, 545; The Velocity of, Dr. V. S. Vrkljan, 269; Scattering, Doppler Effect in, Sir C. V. Raman, 636; in Liquids, S. Venkateswaran, 870
- Lightning : Ball, Charged Aerosols and, W. C. Reynolds, 584; Branching of, Dr. B. F. H. Schonland and Dr. T. E. Allibone, 794; Major J. L. P. Macnair, 969; Discharge, Duration and Magnitude of a, R. S. J. Spilsbury, 872; Unusual, H. E. Beckett and A. F. Dufton, 189; Capt. C. J. P. Cave, 378
- Liquid Mixtures : Diamagnetism of, V. C. G. Trew and Prof. J. F. Spencer, 152; Dr. H. Buchner, 301; Prof. E. van Aubel, 455; S. Ramachandra Rao and G. Sivaramkrishnan, 872; The Viscosity of, Prof. G. W. Stewart, 727; Prof. E. N. da C. Andrade, 835
- Lithium : Constitution of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 149; Hydride, Isotope Effect in the Band Spectrum of, Prof. Gisaburo Nakamura, 759; Metallic, The Excitation Potentials of, Dr. H. W. B. Skinner, 114
- Lithothamnion in the South Indian Cretaceous, Occurrence of, Prof. L. Rama Rao, 225, 873
- London Skull, The, C. N. Bromehead, 118
- Loudspeaker Frequency Response Curves in terms of Loudness, Subjective Interpretation of, D. A. Oliver, 268
- Magnetic : Birefringence, A New Type of, Sir C. V. Raman and S. W. Chinchalkar, 758; Experiments on the Cosmic Rays, Prof. B. Rossi, 300
- Magnetisation, Energy of, Electrical Resistance and, A new relation between, Prof. W. Gerlach and E. Englert, 151
- Magneto-Electric Saturation Effect, The, Dr. O. E. Frivold and S. Koch, 675
- Mallard, Eclipse Plumage in the, Violet K. Tallent, 672
- Matter : Life : Mind, A. Eagle; W. W. L., 906; Dr. W. D. Lighthall, 907; Dr. M. Copisarow, 1042
- Meatal Notch, The External, as a Primitive Character, Prof. F. Wood Jones, 458
- Melanism in Moths, Inheritance of, A. W. McKenny Hughes, 496
- Mercury : Band, Spectrum in the, Fluorescence, Lord Rayleigh, 724; Cadmium, and Zinc, High Frequency Discharge of, The Forbidden Lines in the, J. Okubo and E. Matuyama, 224; Line Spectrum in Fluorescence, Lord Rayleigh, 905; Measurements of the Height of a Large Drop of, R. S. Burdon, 456
- Methane and Ethane, The Slow Combustion of, Prof. W. A. Bone, 188; Dr. E. Mardles, 304
- Molecules, Atoms and, as Fitzgerald Oscillators, Sir C. V. Raman, 795
- Molybdenum Trioxide : Crystal Structure of, a Correction, Nora Wooster, 35
- Monohydric Phenols, Application of the Simonis Reaction to, A. Robertson, 908
- Mosquito Larvæ, Ultra-Violet Rays and, Dr. M. E. MacGregor, 68
- Mousterian (Levalloisian) Implements, Derived early, in the Melt-water Gravels of the Coombe Rock Glaciation, J. P. T. Burchell, 909
- Multiple Ionisation and Secondary X-Ray Absorption Edges, A. Sandström, 759
- National Needs, L. A. Fenn, 909
- Nemertean, A New and Peculiar Marine, from the Australian Coast, Prof. W. J. Dakin and Mahalah G. C. Fordham, 796
- Neon-Helium Bands, Dr. M. J. Druyvesteyn, 1076
- Nitrobenzene : Change of Dielectric Polarisation of, with Temperature, Prof. M. Wolfke and Dr. J. Mazur, 584; Melting Points of, and of Benzene, Prof. I. Masson, 726
- Onothera*, Origin of Chromosome Linkage in, Prof. R. A. Gates and D. G. Catcheside, 637
- Oestrus-producing Hormones, Dr. G. F. Marrian and A. Butenandt, 305
- Ogilvie, Sir Francis, The late, J. Cameron Smail, 118
- Oldway : Bone Beds : Tanganyika Territory, Age of the, Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, A. T. Hopwood, and Prof. H. Reek, 724; New Yields from the, Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, A. T. Hopwood, and Prof. H. Reek, 1075; Human Skeleton, The, J. Reid Moir, 797
- Opacity Coefficient, The Relativistic, R. C. Majumdar and D. S. Kothari, 909
- Oxlip, Wild, Segregation of Floral Characters in the, Prof. F. E. Weiss, 305
- Oxygen and Everest, N. E. Odell, 1037
- Ozone, Photosensitised Decomposition of, by Bromine, J. W. T. Spinks, 548
- Phosphorus, Green Flame of, Band Spectrum of the, Dr. E. B. Ludlam, 271
- Photoelectrons and Negative Ions, Prof. E. M. Wellish, 547; Dr. J. L. Hamshere, 871
- Photon : Evidence of the Spin of the, from Light-Scattering, Sir C. V. Raman and S. Bhagavantam, 114; Dr. G. Placzek, 410; The Spin of the, Prof. W. N. Saha and Y. Bhargava, 870;
- Plants, Mortality among, and its bearing on Natural Selection, R. Weatherall, 33



- Polarisation of Downcoming Wireless Waves in the Southern Hemisphere, Prof. E. V. Appleton, 1037
- Polarity and Vapour Pressure, Dr. A. R. Martin, 456
- Polyhedra, Embryology and the Theory of, Prof. D'Arcy W. Thompson, 31
- Potassium,  $\beta$ -Radiation of, A Hard Component of the, D. Bocciarelli, 374
- Potatoes, Respiration of Healthy and Leaf Roll, Dr. T. Whitehead, 967
- Pottery with Flint Implements of Upper Palæolithic Facies from Swanscombe, Kent, J. P. T. Burchell, 548
- Precipitation, Periodic, in the Absence of Colloids, Prof. J. W. McBain, 1042
- Prickly-Pear, Control of, by the Cochineal Insect, C. T. Jacob, 117; W. B. Alexander, 226; T. V. Ramakrishna Ayyar, 837
- Priestley and Lavoisier, Sir Philip Hartog, 797
- Prophylaxis, Experiments in, Sir Flinders Petrie, 35
- Proteins in their Native State, Molecular Weights of the, Prof. The Svedberg, 999
- Puccinia graminis tritici*, Effect of Light on Urediniospores of Black Stem Rust of Wheat, W. A. R. Dillon Weston, 67
- Quantised Magnetic Poles, Isolated, Prof. O. W. Richardson, 582
- Quantum-Mechanical Models of a Nucleus, R. H. Fowler, 453
- Quartz, Anomalous Variation of the Electrical Conductivity of, with Temperature at the Transformation Point, Prof. H. Saegusa and S. Shimizu, 835
- Radioactivity and Earth Movements, Prof. A. Holmes, 496
- Rainfall as Carbohydrates, Conservation of, Prof. W. A. Osborne, 378
- Raman: Band of Water, Structure of the, S. Rafałowski; Dr. G. Bolla, 546; Lines due to Co-ordination Bond, Prof. D. M. Bose and S. Datta, 725; in Liquids, Fine Structure of, Dr. A. Langseth, 225; Scattering in Gases, Intensity of, S. Bhagavantam, 272; Scattering, Polarisation of, by Hydrogen Gas, S. Bhagavantam, 70; Spectra: Effect of Pressure on, S. Bhagavantam, 188; of Benzene and Toluene, L. E. Howlett, 796; of Crystals, Lines of Large Frequency Shift in the, Prof. R. Tomaschek, 495; of Liquid Mixtures, P. Krishnamurti, 639
- Rare Gas Spectra, Intensity Anomalies in, E. Rasmussen and H. Swenson, 188
- Relativistic Opacity Coefficient, The, R. C. Majumdar and D. S. Kothari, 909
- Resonator, The Bottle-Pipe, A. E. Bate, 270
- Rhenium, Magnetic Resolution and Nuclear Moment of, Prof. P. Zeeman, J. H. Gisolf, and T. L. de Bruin, 637
- Rocks, Lead Content of, Prof. G. Hevesy and Dr. R. Hobbie, 1038; Prof. A. Holmes, 1039
- Rotatory Magnetic Polarisation, Prof. E. van Aubel, 1004
- Rubidium Spectrum, Hyperfine Structure in the, D. A. Jackson, 34
- Salt Hydrate, Dissociation of a, Function of Water Vapour in the, B. Topley and M. L. Smith, 302
- Salts, Dehydration of, Dr. M. Copisarow, 838
- Science, Bibliography of, Classification for, Dr. S. C. Bradford, 268
- Scientific Abstracting Services, Organisation of, A. A. Eldridge, 1004
- Seedlings in some Grasses, Latency of, H. G. Chippindale, 1075
- Serum Albumin, Denaturation of, Temperature Stability and, Prof. K. O. Pedersen, 150
- Ship-Waves, Rhythmic Breaking of, Prof. Kerr Grant, 838
- Short-Wave Reception and Ultra-Radiation, Dr. W. M. H. Schulze, 837
- Silica Vessels, Chemical Changes in, Influence of Hydrogen on, Prof. M. W. Travers, L. E. Hockin, and T. J. P. Pearce, 66
- Silver, Bivalent, Paramagnetism of, Prof. G. T. Morgan and Dr. S. Sugden, 31
- Simonis Reaction, Application of the, to Monohydric Phenols, A. Robertson, 908
- Snakes, Insectivorous, Prof. F. J. Meggitt, 413
- Sound in Tubes: Velocity of, Ultrasonic Method, G. S. Field, 117
- Space Lattice? A Two-Dimensional, Dr. R. C. Menzies 907; W. Baker, 1078
- Special Lines of Light scattered by Liquids, The Fine Structure of, S. Rafałowski, 495
- Spectrum Se III, The Structure of the, J. S. Badami and Dr. K. R. Rao, 496
- Stars: White Dwarf, Constitution of the, Seitarô Suzuki, 838; White Dwarf, The Internal Temperature of, Prof. E. A. Milne, 999
- Stellar Velocities, Measurement of, Absorption Spectra of Crystals at Low Temperatures as References in the, S. Freed, 33
- Stratified Clouds, Electrical Conditions in, Dr. M. Grabham, 969
- Strontium and Barium, New Isotopes of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 221
- Superconductivity: a Polarisation Phenomenon, Prof. J. C. McLennan, 373; at High Frequencies, Prof. J. C. McLennan, A. C. Burton, A. Pitt, and J. O. Wilhelm, 1004
- Surface Films, A Method of Studying, Prof. E. Gorter and W. A. Seeder, 413
- Temperature Stability and Denaturation of Serum Albumin, Prof. K. O. Pedersen, 150
- Thallium: II, Hyperfine Structure of, Dr. J. B. Green and J. Wulff; Dr. J. Schuler and J. E. Keyston, 409; and Uranium, Constitution of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 725; Indium and, Arc Spectra of, Fine Structure in the, Dr. A. L. Narayan, 675
- Theophylline Arabinoside, The Pyranoid Structure of Glucuronic Acid and of, J. Pryde and R. T. Williams, 187
- Thrips tabaci* as a Vector of Plant Virus Disease, G. Samuel and J. G. Bald, 494
- Ticks, The Spermatogenesis of, Prof. E. Warren, 454
- Tigroid, Chemical Nature of the, Prof. A. Szent-Györgyi, 761
- Titanium in the Tetrachloride, Valency and Diamagnetism of, Dr. V. I. Vaidhianathan, 189
- Toluene, Benzene and, Raman Spectra of, L. E. Howlett, 796
- Tomlinson, the late Mr. Herbert, J. J. Abraham, 153
- Trifluorides of Aluminium, Iron, Cobalt, Rhodium, and Palladium, Structure of the, J. A. A. Katelaar, 303
- Turbulence in a River, Dr. H. Jeffreys, 1078
- Ultra: Radiation, Short Wave Reception and, Dr. W. M. H. Schulze, 837; Violet: Light of the Sky, An Apparatus for Recording the, Dr. P. W. Cunliffe, 35; Radiation, Measurement of, A. F. Dufton and H. E. Beckett, 223; Rays and Mosquito Larvæ, Dr. M. E. MacGregor, 68
- Uranium, Thallium and, Constitution of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 725
- Uric Acid, Excretion of, Dr. V. B. Wigglesworth, 116; Dr. J. Needham, 152
- Uteroverdin, Dr. R. Lemberg, Prof. J. Barcroft, and Dr. D. Keilin, 967
- Virus Disease of the Tobacco Plant, A New, Dr. H. H. Storey, 187
- Viruses, Nature of, Prof. A. E. Boycott, 727
- Viscosity of Liquids, The, Prof. G. W. Stewart, 727; Prof. E. N. da C. Andrade, 835
- Vitamin: A and the Antimony Chloride Reaction, A. Emmerie, M. v. Eekelen, and Prof. L. K. Wolff, 495; D, Crystalline, F. A. Askew, Miss H. M. Bruce, Dr. R. K. Callow, St. J. L. Philpot, and T. A. Webster, 758
- Water Vapour in the Dissociation of a Salt Hydrate, Function of, B. Topley and M. L. Smith, 302
- Weiss Units, The Theoretical Magnetron Numbers in, Dr. C. J. Gorter, 68
- White Dwarf Stars, Constitution of the, Seitarô Suzuki, 838
- Wires drawn through Rotating Dies, H. Greenwood and Prof. F. C. Thompson, 152
- Wood Fibres, The Tertiary Wall of, S. H. Clarke, 1078
- World List of Scientific Periodicals, The, Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, 70
- X-Ray: Diffraction Intensities, Anomalous, W. A. Wood, 272; Fibre Photography, S. Zeidenfeld, 70
- X-Rays, Part-Absorption in, Dr. B. B. Ray and B. B. Datta, 224
- Yard, Determination of the, in terms of the Wave-length of Light, J. E. Sears, Jr.; Dr. A. E. H. Tutton, 965
- Yeast, Oxidation Reduction Potential of Complex Iron Compounds in, T. B. Coolidge, 223
- Zeeman Effect of a Forbidden Line, E. Segrè and Dr. C. J. Bakker, 1076



- Corrosion Problems, Thin Films in Relation to, U. R. Evans, 489
- Cosmic : and  $\gamma$ -Radiation, Biological Effects of, Prof. J. H. Orton and S. T. Burfield, 376 ; Evolution and Earthly Needs, Prof. H. E. Armstrong, 761 ; Problems : an Essay on Speculative Philosophy, Prof. J. S. Mackenzie, 628 ; Radiation, Fluctuations in, G. Hoffmann, 120 ; Rays : and Gamma Rays, Similarity between, Prof. R. A. Millikan and Dr. I. S. Bowen, 582 ; Magnetic Experiments on the, Prof. B. Rossi, 300 ; The Corpuscular Explanation of, Prof. F. Soddy, 408 ; The Nature of, Prof. C. Störmer, 83
- Cosmical Constant, The, and the Wave Equation, Sir Arthur Eddington, 763
- Cotton : Cross-Pollination in, Dr. M. A. Fikry, 1080 ; Growing in Egypt, Dr. W. L. Balls, and others ; F. P. Slater, 766 ; N. W. Barritt, 1001 ; F. P. Slater, 1002
- Craven Area, Jointing and Tectonics of the, L. R. Wager, 460
- Crayfish, Lateral Giant-fibres in the, Histological Polarisation of, S. G. Warner, 164
- Creative Science and Industry, 317
- Cresols, A Method of separating the, and the Properties of Pure *m*-Cresol, G. Darzens, 315
- Crime as Destiny : a Study of Criminal Twins, Prof. J. Lange. Translated by Charlotte Haldane, 630
- Crimea, Rodents from the Quaternary Deposits in the, A. A. Birula, 127
- Criminal Statistics, 1929, 61
- Crompton Medal of the Institution of Automobile Engineers, Award of the, to Dr. S. J. Davies and E. Giffen, 635
- Cross, Dorothy Temple, Fellowships, Award of, 220
- Cruciferous Flower, Structural Features of the, Dr. Agnes Arber, 1043
- Crude Oil, Relation between the Yield of, and the Composition of Retortable Carbonaceous Minerals, H. Briggs, 42
- Crustacea, Musculature of, Dr. R. J. Daniel, 970
- Crust-Movements after the Tango Earthquake of 1927, Prof. C. Tsuboi, 380
- Cryptotoxins, New Researches on the, H. Vincent, 918
- Crystal : Palace Show, Exhibits at the, 995 ; Structure Representation of, Prof. E. B. Bailey, 869
- Crystallisation Centre, The Nature of a, A. Glazunov, 128
- Crystallography, The New, Prof. W. L. Bragg, 511
- Crystals : of Brookite Tabular Parallel to the Basal Plane, F. C. Phillips, 977 ; Structure of  $XO_3$  Groups in, W. H. Zachariassen, 274
- Cuckoo, Feeding of a Yearling, 296
- Culture Media, A Compilation of, for the Cultivation of Micro-organisms, Prof. M. Levine and H. W. Schoenlein, 244
- Cuprous Oxide : Cells, Variation in the Spectrum of the Sensibility of, P. Auger and C. Lapique, 646 ; Photoelectric Cells, Sensibility of, of the Type with Copper Grid, L. Dubar, 918
- Current Economic Theory in Relation to the Five-Year Plan, M. Dobb, 790
- Currents, Deep, in the South Atlantic, Velocity of, G. E. R. Deacon, 267
- Cyanidin Chloride, Constitution of, Dr. M. Nierenstein, 587
- Cyanogen : and the Cyanogen Halides, Ultra-Violet Absorption Spectra of, R. B. Mooney and H. G. Reid, 271 ; The Absorption Spectra of, and the Cyanogen Halides, R. B. Mooney and H. G. Reid, 882
- 1, 2-Cyclohexanedione or Dihydro-pyrocatechol, E. Urion, 315
- Dabbara abyssin, Le livre de recettes d'un, M. Griaule, 204
- Dairy Research, Sir William Dampier, 1071
- Daylight, Actinic Value of, Records of, G. G. Gibbs, 35
- Dean, Bashford, Memorial Volume, Archaic Fishes, Edited by Dr. E. W. Gudger, 182
- Death and Development, Prof. E. W. MacBride, 382
- Debye-Hückel Equation, Activity Coefficients and the, 499
- Decimal Classification, Universal, 680
- Delphinium*, Mutable Genes in, Demerec, 676
- Demography, History of, 940
- Deserts and the Birth of Civilisations, A. J. McInerny, 475
- Deutschlands, Stratigraphie, Handbuch der vergleichenden, Alluvium, Schriftleitung, late Prof. J. Stoller. Unter Mitwirkung von K. von Bülow und W. Dienemann, 1025
- Diamagnetism : and the Colloidal State, S. Ramachandra Rao, 153 ; of Liquid Mixtures, S. Ramachandra Rao and G. Sivaramakrishnan, 872
- Diatomic Gases, Scattering by, E. O. Wollan, 1014
- Diatoms Growing on Stones on the Black Sea Littoral near Sebastopol, N. F. Alexeenko, 422
- Dielectric Constant, The, and Chemical Constitution, A. Chrétien, 163
- Diencephalon, A possible 'Parasympathetic Centre' in the, H. Cushing, 422
- Diet : and Disease, 326 ; The 'Vital' Factor in, Dr. C. Watson, 154
- Diffusion for the Infinite Plane Sheet, A. T. McKay, 733
- Dinaphthopyrone, A New Method of Synthesis of, K. Dziejowski and S. Pizoń, 279
- Dinoflagellates, Japanese, Prof. C. A. Kofoid, 154
- Diopside and Tremolite from Monte Spinoso in the Campigliese, F. Rodolico, 1014
- Diptera of Patagonia and South Chile, Part 6, fasc. 2, 112
- Disasters at the Moon's Third Quarter, A. Rosewood, 997
- Discharge : Tubes and their Technical Applications, N. L. Harris and H. G. Jenkins, 330 ; without Electrodes, The Theory of the, F. Esclangon, 82
- Disease, Diet and, 326
- Dissociable Organic Oxides, Researches on the, C. Dufraisse and M. Badoche, 422
- Dissolved Substance, Distribution of a, between the Crystalline and the Fluid Phase, V. Chlopin and A. Ratner, 387
- Diving Devices, Modern, Capt. G. C. C. Damant, 324
- Domestic Animals, The Sensibility of, to the Virus of Exanthematic Fever, G. Blanc and J. Caminopétros, 503
- Dominance, Evolution of, Dr. R. A. Fisher, 1079
- Donohoe Comet Medal, award of the, to M. Nagata, 868
- Doppler Effect in Light-Scattering, Sir C. V. Raman, 636
- Drum Storage Battery, Use of, in Ireland, 994
- Dry : Cleaner, Practical, Scourer and Garment Dyer. Edited by W. T. Brannt and J. B. Gray. Sixth edition, 1060 ; Liquids, Distillation of, J. W. Smith, 971
- Drying, Mechanism of, Dr. G. Bozza, 380
- Dulcitol in a Red Seaweed, Occurrence of, Dr. P. Haas and Prof. T. G. Hill, 378
- Duralumin, Influence of Variations in Heat-treatment and Ageing on, A. von Zeerleder, 554
- Durham University, Philosophical Society of, election of officers, 723
- 'Dust Devils', Rotation of, J. Durward, 412
- Dyestuff Industry : Advances in the, Prof. F. Mayer, 792 ; The, Prof. H. E. Armstrong, 542
- Dynamic Universe, The, Prof. J. Mackaye, 288
- $\beta$ -ethylnaphthalene and its Hydrogenation Products, G. Lévy, 163
- Ear, The Cupula of the, R. E. Bowen, 846
- Early Man in North-East Yorkshire, F. Elgee, 776
- Earth : Interior of the, Composition of the, A. A. Bless, 280 ; Physics of the : Volcanology ; The Figure of the Earth ; Meteorology ; The Age of the Earth, Dr. H. Jeffreys, 984 ; Movements, Radioaction, and, Prof. A. Holmes, 496
- Earthquake : in Western China, 407 ; Recorded at Kew, 332 ; The Idu (Japan) of Nov. 26, 1930, Dr. C. Davison, 552 ; The North Sea, Rev. J. P. Rowland, 15
- Earthquakes : and Mineral Springs, B. M. Radoslavoff, 677 ; Deep-Focus, F. J. Scrase, 228 ; Rev. V. C. Stechschulte, 673 ; Luminous Phenomena accompanying, K. Musya, 155 ; Recent, 299
- Earths : and Alkaline Earths, Preparation of the Cyanamides of the, Mlle. Germaine Bernheim, 315
- Earth's Crust, Properties of the, 549



- Earwig, Function of the Forceps of the Common, M. H. Lapidge and Dr. van der Sleen, 756; F. G. Carruthers, 440
- Echinoderm Larvæ, Prof. T. Mortensen; Dr. F. A. Bather, 417
- Echinostomes from Rats, A. Tubanguí, 227
- Eclipse Observations and the Einstein Shift, Prof. E. Freundlich, 1045
- Ecological Viewpoint, The, Prof. J. W. Bews, 245
- Edinburgh University: conferment of Honorary and other Doctorates, 80; Dr. C. McNeil appointed Edward Clark Professor of Child Life and Health in, 197; E. G. Dymond appointed Lecturer in Natural Philosophy; Dr. E. L. Ince, Lecturer in Mathematics; Dr. R. A. R. Gresson, Lecturer in Zoology (Cytology); Dr. P. Gray, Lecturer in Zoology (Vertebrate Embryology); and Lt.-Col. S. H. Cowan, Lecturer in Forest Engineering, 880
- Educational Broadcasting, Prof. Winifred Cullis, 877
- Eels and Conger Eels of the North Atlantic, Prof. J. Schmidt, 602
- Egg, Development of the, Dr. G. L. Streeter, 1005
- Egypt: Ancient, Hippopotamus Figures from, W. M. Crompton, 273; and the Sudan, Hand-spinning in, Mrs. Grace M. Crowfoot, 71; Cotton Growing in, N. W. Barritt, 1001; F. P. Slater, 1002; J. Palæolithic Man in, 287
- Egyptian: Figurine, An Archaic, G. Loukianoff, 640; Sealings, Ancient, Dr. G. A. Reisner, 1079
- Einmamic Aldehyde, A New Method of Synthesis of, and its Homologues substituted in the Nucleus, L. Bert and R. Annequin, 125
- Einstein: Shift, Eclipse Observations and the, Prof. E. Freundlich, 1045; Universe, Static, On Thermodynamic Equilibrium in a, R. C. Tolman, 164
- Eiszeitalter: Das; Grundlinien einer Geologie des Diluviums, Dr. P. Woldstedt, 394
- Elastic Equilibrium, The Intrinsic Equations of, G. Andruetto, 734
- Electric: and Magnetic Units, The Convention of Equidimensional, A. E. Kennelly, 164; Circuit Breaker Research, E. B. Wedmore, A. M. Cassie, and W. B. Whitney, 675; Clocks, F. Hope-Jones, 651; Field at the Summit of the Puy de Dôme, The, E. Mathias and G. Grenet, 806; Light and Power: Supply Companies, The Interconnexion of, Prof. K. Field, 297; Companies, Unification of, Capt. J. M. Donaldson, 755; Stations: Two Historic, Dr. G. A. Orrok; Col. R. E. B. Crompton, 140; Value of Linking Up, N. E. Funk, 669; Propulsion of Liners, A. D. Constable, 16; Traction Experiment in Ireland, An, 994
- Electrical: Engineers, Institution of: award of Scholarships by the, 278; election of Officers of the, 147; Oscillator of Low Frequency Stabilised by a Tuning Fork, An, G. Marboux, 42; Resistance and Energy of Magnetisation, A New Relation between, Prof. W. Gerlach and E. Englert, 151; Supply, Application of, for the Provision of Labour-saving Devices, 62; System, A Self-maintained, utilising a Neon Tube, B. Decaux and P. Le Corbeiller, 978
- Electricity: and Magnetism: A Connexion between, Dr. P. A. M. Dirac, 586; an Advanced Text-book for Colleges, Prof. C. A. Culver, 629; Physical Principles of, Prof. R. W. Pohl. Translated by Winifred M. Deans, 134; and the Soil, 252; for Everybody: Handbook for 1931, R. B. Matthews, 960; in the Rumanian Oilfields, Use of, H. E. Dralle, 633; Liberated, Measurement of the, during the Downgrade Reactions of Organic Compounds, J. H. Wolfenden, 69; Magnetism and, School Certificate, Dr. H. Toms, 431; Supply, Standardisation of, 16; The Mechanical Aspects of, Ll. B. Atkinson, 865
- Electrification of Railways of Great Britain, The, 179
- Electrochemistry, A Laboratory Manual of, Prof. E. Müller. Translated by Dr. H. J. T. Ellingham, 743
- Electrodynamical Relations in Electromagnetic Machinery, The Fundamental Features of, E. Semičev, 126
- Electrodynamics: Certain Fundamental Theorems of, and of the Statics of Elastic Solids (2), D. Bonvicini, 806; Gauss's Investigations on, Prof. C. Schaefer, 339
- Electrokinetic Potentials, Studies on, H. B. Bull and R. A. Gortner (9), 423
- Electrokinetics and the Interpretation of Surface Conductivity, McBain and Du Bois, 677
- Electrolysis, Quantum Theory of, Dr. R. W. Gurney, 1044
- Electrolytes in Solution, Behaviour of, Sir Harold Hartley, and others, 680
- Electromagnetic Waves: Propagation of, Prof. H. Nagaoka, 120; Reflection of very Short, R. Guyot, 503
- Electromagnetism, Dynamical Aspects of, Prof. V. K. F. Bjercknes, 369
- Electron: Diffraction, Prof. D. R. Hartree, 47; Diffraction Patterns, A Focusing Method for Producing, Dr. A. A. Lebedeff, 491; Exchange Phenomena in the Excited Atom, Prof. R. Whiddington and J. E. Roberts, 966; -Inertia Effect, A New, Prof. Barnett, 549; Theory, A Generation of, O. U. Vonwiller, 200
- Electronic Impacts in Air, The Ionising Efficiency of, J. Thomson, 81
- Electrons: Diffraction of, F. L. Arnot and E. C. Bullard; H. S. W. Massey, 799; Polarisation of a Beam of, by Scattering, E. G. Dymond, 149; N. F. Mott, 454
- Elektroneninterferenzen, Herausgegeben von Prof. P. Debye, 396
- Elektrophorese, Elektroosmose, Elektrodialyse in Flüssigkeiten, Dr. P. H. Prausnitz und Dr. J. Reitstötter, 988
- Element: of Atomic Number 87, Reported Identification of the, by Dr. J. Papish, 696; 61, Investigation on, by means of the X-Rays, S. Takvorian, 82; No. 87, The Discovery of, Papish and Wainer, 789
- Elks (*Alces* Gray) of the Old World, K. K. Flerov, 503
- Empire: Cotton Growing Corporation, Quarterly Report of the Executive Committee, 754; Marketing Board, Report of the, 1930-31, 251; Survey Officers, Conference of, 276; *Survey Review*, pt. 1, 266; Travel for British Students, 196
- Employment in Great Britain, Fluctuations in, Dr. F. C. Benham, 753
- Encke's Comet, 38; H. E. Wood, 156
- Endothermic Compounds, The Maximum Concentration of, at High Temperatures, E. Briner and B. Susz, 83
- Engineering: Apprentices, Selection of, 463; Societies Monographs, Projected, 183
- Entomological Society of London, The Transactions of the, vol. 79, part 1, 689
- Entomology: Agricultural, A Textbook of, Dr. Kenneth M. Smith; Dr. A. E. Cameron, 943; A History of, Prof. E. O. Essig, 655; Applied, 655
- Environment and Plant Development. Being "Klima und Boden in ihrer Wirkung auf das Pflanzenleben", Prof. H. Lundegårdh. Translated and edited by E. Ashby, 135
- Enzyme-Substrate Reactions, Contraction Constants of, M. Sreenivasaya and H. B. Sreerangachar, 585
- Ephedrine and related Substances, K. K. Chen und C. F. Schmidt, 629
- Epidemiological Essays, Dr. F. G. Crookshank, 323
- Equality, R. H. Tawney, 964
- Eros, The recent Opposition of, Prof. J. Hartmann and M. Dartayet, 550
- Erzmikroskopische Bestimmungstafeln: Anhang zum Lehrbuch der Erzmikroskopie, Prof. H. Schneiderhöhn und Prof. P. Ramdohr, 889
- Erzmikroskopie, Lehrbuch der, Prof. H. Schneiderhöhn und Prof. P. Ramdohr, Band 2, 889
- Esperanto in Scientific Literature, R. M. Morris-Owen, 969
- Ethane, Methane and, The Slow Combustion of, Dr. E. Mardles, 304; Prof. W. A. Bone, 188
- Ethnos: or the Problem of Race considered from a New Point of View, Sir Arthur Keith, 624
- Ethyl: Alcohol, Synthesis of, Prof. G. T. Morgan and R. Taylor, 38; Radical, Isolation of the, Prof. Paneth and Lautsch, 1007; Thio-aceto-acetate, Synthesis of, Sir P. C. Rây, 189
- Ethylene, Oxidation of, Lenher, 912
- Ethylmagnesium Bromide, Action of, on *N*-diethylmono-chloroacetamide, Sou Phou Ti, 199
- Eugenics, Positive, in Practice, A. Dachert, 147
- Eurymelinae (Cicadelloidea, Homoptera), Biology and Morphology of the, J. W. Evans, 387
- Eurytemora thompsoni*, A. Willey: a New European Record, A. G. Lowndes, 967
- Everest, Oxygen and, N. E. Odell, 1037; Dr. R. Greene, 993



- Evolution : revealed by Palæontology, The Principles of, Prof. H. F. Osborn, 894 ; Some Examples of, H. Douvillé, 918 ; The Evidence of Palæontology with regard to, Prof. A. E. Trueman, 990
- Evolutionist, A Complete, 429
- Ewing's Model of the Magnetic Atom, The Specific Heat of Ferromagnetics and, Dr. J. R. Ashworth, 1003
- Exanthematic Fever in Man caused by *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*, J. Troisier and R. Cattán, 422
- Expansion, The Phenomena of, Presented by certain Electrolytic Deposits of Metals, C. Marie and N. Thon, 421
- Experimentalphysik, Handbuch der. Herausgegeben von W. Wien und F. Harms. Unter Mitarbeit von H. Lenz. Band 4. Teil 1, 654
- Explosion Flames, Photographic Analysis of, Prof. W. A. Bone, 589
- Explosions in Closed Cylinders, Kirkby and Wheeler, 729
- External Mental Notch as a Primitive Character, The, Prof. F. Wood Jones, 458
- Extinct Volcanoes of Western Scotland, 619
- Extracts from Plant Tissues, Polarographic Analysis with the Dropping Mercury Cathode of, J. Babička, 1013
- Eyes, Mineral Content of, H. Ramage and J. H. Sheldon, 376
- Fabrician Types of Insects in the Hunterian Collection at Glasgow University, The, Coleoptera, Part 1, R. A. Staig, 1034
- False Killer Whale in Ceylon Waters, Dr. J. Pearson, 839
- Faraday : E. W. Ashcroft, 323 ; and Austria, Prof. K. Przibram, 351 ; and British Association Centenaries, The, 328 ; and Electrical Science in Russia and the U.S.S.R., W. T. Mitkewich, 359 ; and French Physicists, Prof. P. Brunet, 346 ; and his Contemporaries, Engr.-Capt. E. C. Smith, 333 ; and his Discoveries, A Talking Film of, 541 ; and Marine Boilers, 1031 ; and Ørsted, Mrs. Kirstine Meyer, 337 ; as a Botanist, Dr. R. W. Butcher, 820 ; Centenary : Celebration at Warsaw, 864 ; Commemorative Meeting, The, 520 ; Exhibition, 564 ; Festival, The, Prof. B. Brauner, 352 ; India's Debt to, Sir C. V. Raman, 362
- Faraday's : "Chemical Manipulation", Sir Robert Robertson and B. A. Ellis, 371 ; Connexion with Switzerland and Swiss Industrial and Economic Development, Prof. C. E. Guye, 349 ; Discovery of Electromagnetic Induction, The Modern Electric Age in Relation to, Prof. A. E. Kennelly, 356 ; London Friends, H. G. Wayling, 482 ; Observations on the Interior of the Mind, Prof. Fraser Harris, 612 ; Researches : and the United States, Prof. W. R. Whitney, 353 ; Italian Physicists and, Prof. V. Volterra, 342 ; on Magneto-Optics and their Development, Prof. P. Zeeman, 365
- Fats, Mechanism of the Synthesis of, at the Expense of Glucides, P. R. Bohn, 770
- Fédération des Institutions internationales établies à Genève, The, 182
- Feeding Stuffs, Home-grown, Dr. H. E. Woodman, 298
- Fermentation, Acceleration of, by Algæ and Sea-water, Dr. Pirrone, 419
- Ferranti Scholarship of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, award of the, to W. G. Thompson, 581
- Ferro-magnetic Test Pieces, Search for Want of Symmetry and Faults in, J. Peltier, 733
- Ferromagnetics, The Specific Heat of, and Ewing's Model of the Magnetic Atom, Dr. J. R. Ashworth, 1003
- Ferrous Metallurgy, The Elements of, Dr. J. L. Rosenholtz, 626
- Fibre Photography, X-Ray, S. Zeidenfeld, 70
- Field : Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Prof. S. H. Langdon and Dr. L. Diels elected Corresponding Members of the, 756 ; Naturalists' Club of Victoria, Jubilee of the, 668
- Fifty-two Years of Research, Observation, and Publication, 1877-1920 : a Life Adventure in Breadth and Depth. Prof. H. F. Osborn. Edited by Florence Milligan, 625
- Fight Against Disease, Autumn Number, 1072
- Film Projection, A New System of, Dr. R. T. A. Innes, 1048
- Filtration : An Electro-motive Force of, of Abnormal Value, L. Riéty and G. Salager, 1050 ; The Electro-motive Force of, produced by the Ascent of the Sap in Plants, N. Marinisco, 422
- Finance, Control of, P. B. Whale, 730
- Finland, Geological Map of, 728
- Firedamp, Causes of Ignition of, by Permitted Explosives, Grimshaw and Payman, 867
- Fischer and Bülow's Pyrazole, Constitution of, P. J. Drumm, 162
- Fishery Research, Advisory Committee on, Prof. G. C. Bourne appointed Chairman of the, 184
- Fitzgerald Oscillators, Atoms and Molecules as, Sir C. V. Raman, 795
- Flack, Group-Capt. Martin, Sir Leonard Hill, 496
- Flame : Propagation in an Electric Field, Prof. W. A. Bone, R. P. Frazer, and W. H. Wheeler, 274 ; Temperatures, Jones, Lewis, and Seaman, 1081
- Flash Discharge, Experimental Investigations on the, G. Valle, 806
- Flavelle Medal of the Royal Society of Canada, award of the, to Dr. F. G. Banting, 275
- Flights from Chaos : a Survey of Material Systems from Atoms to Galaxies, Dr. H. Shapley, 615
- Flint, The Age of, M. Burton, 32
- Flood-lighting : Display, Lessons from the, P. Good, 822 ; in London, 439, 487
- Flow at High Velocities, Application of (Optical) Interference to some Problems of, R. Tremblot, 733
- Flower Anomalies, Some, and their Mode of Inheritance in Primulas, E. Tschermak, 43
- Fluid Motion, 654
- Fluides, Mécanique des, Prof. H. Villat, 654
- Fluorescence : and Free Neutral Radicals, A Connexion between, Dr. W. A. Waters, 905 ; Mercury Line Spectrum in, Lord Rayleigh, 905
- Fluorine : Determination of, as Calcium Fluoride, E. Carrière and Janssens, 806 ; The Atomic Weight of, Prof. E. Moles, 966 ; H. S. Patterson, Prof. R. Whytlaw-Gray, and W. Cawood, 375 ; The Estimation of, P. Mougnaud, 386 ; The Heat of Dissociation of, Manohar S. Desai, 34
- Fluorite Crystals, On Different Habits of, J. Drugman, 42
- Flying : as a Career, Major O. Stewart, 961 ; Cross-Country, Major O. Stewart, 961 ; -fish, W. L. Calderwood, 216 ; Fox in Australia, The, F. N. Ratcliffe, 122
- Focal Pellets, The Form of, and Specific Identification, Prof. R. Macdonald, 68
- Fogs of the Meuse Valley, The Poisonous Effect of the, due to Industrial Emanations, F. Bertyn, 422
- Food : Investigation Board, Report of the, 1930, 551 ; The Preservation of, 551
- Foot-and-Mouth Disease Research, Prof. J. M. Beattie, 765
- Foreign Pests, Against, 85
- Forest : Entomology in India, The Study of, 767 ; Gardens, J. Macdonald, 915 ; Travel in the Tropics, 1059
- Forestry : Vol. 5, No. 1, 935 ; in the British Empire, The Inception and Development of, Sir Alexander Rodger, 833 ; Mycorrhiza in Relation to, Dr. M. C. Rayner, 1011 ; Practice and Research, A. C. Forbes, 31 ; Research in Great Britain, F. T. Brooks ; J. Ramsbottom, 118
- Forests, an Imperial Treasure, 145
- Formal Logic, Dr. N. R. Campbell, 620
- Forthcoming Books of Science, 631
- Fortin Barometer, Casella and Co.'s New Pattern of, 732
- Fossil : Plants from the Bokkeveld and Witteberg Beds of South Africa, Prof. A. C. Seward, 1012 ; Timber from the Sydney Harbour Colliery, R. T. Baker, 806
- Fowl, Domestic, Inheritance of Body Weight in, N. F. Waters, 846
- France, Le littoral du nord de la, et son évolution morphologique, suivi d'un appendice : L'Évolution du rivage du nord de la France et l'activité de l'homme, A. Briquet, 396
- Freiburg im Breisgau University : conferment of honorary degrees upon Lord Rutherford, Prof. Siegbahn, and Prof. Goldschmidt, 756 ; New Laboratory for Physical Chemistry, 833



- French Physicists, Faraday and, Prof. P. Brunet, 346  
 Freshwater Algae and Phytoplankton from the Transvaal, G. Nygaard, 316  
 Fritz, John, Gold Medal, award of the, to Prof. M. I. Pupin, 868  
 Frog's Gastrocnemius, Myothermic Experiments on the, Prof. A. V. Hill, 805  
 Frost Injury to Plants, R. Newton and W. R. Brown, 911  
 Fulani of Northern Nigeria, The, G. W. Webster, 874  
 Fungi: Entomogenous, T. Petch, 874; Higher, Recent Advances in our Knowledge of the, Prof. A. H. R. Buller, 81; Researches on, Prof. A. H. R. Buller, Vol. 4, 944  
 Fungus: and Scale Insect, Symbiosis of, J. N. Couch, 119; Sexuality of a, Influence of Yeast Extracts and Concentrates of B Vitamins on the, W. H. Schopfer, 734  
 $\gamma$ -Rays, Origin of, Lord Rutherford and Dr. C. D. Ellis, 415, 805  
 Galactic Rotation, Prof. P. Stroobant, 764  
 Galapagos Islands, Birds of the, H. S. Swarth, 762  
 Galaxy and the Solar Apex, Rotation of the, shown by the Radial Velocities of the Helium Stars, P. Stroobant, 846  
 Gallium in the Organism, Distribution of, C. Levaditi, J. Bardet, A. Tchakirian, and A. Vaisman, 466  
 Gallnuts as a Chemical Reagent, Dr. M. Nierenstein, 1006  
 Game Reserves in South Africa, New, Prof. H. B. Fantham, 992  
 Gamma Rays: Absorption of the Penetrating, by Lead Screens 12-30 cm. thick, A. Piccard, E. Stahel, and F. Dony, 846; Cosmic Rays and, Similarity between, Prof. R. A. Millikan and Dr. I. S. Bowen, 582  
*Gammarus chevreuxi* Sexton, A New Locality for, F. T. K. Pentelow, 797  
 'Gapes' in Chickens, The Treatment of, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins, 585  
 Gas Reactions, Heterogeneous, Absolute Rates of, B. Topley, 115  
 Gaseous Explosions, Limits of, M. Neumann and A. Serbinoff, 1040  
 Gases, Rare, The Thermal Conductivity of the, M. Curie and A. Lepape, 1050  
 Gassendi and the Transit of Mercury, 787  
 Gasteromycetes of Australasia, The, G. H. Cunningham (11). The Phallales (pt. 2), 280  
 Gaster Siccata B.D.H., British Drug Houses, Ltd., 183  
 Gauss's Investigations on Electrodynamics, Prof. C. Schaefer, 339  
 Geiger: Counter, A Counting Device for use with the, Dr. J. C. Jacobsen, 674; Counters, A Method of Recording Coincidences between, Dr. J. C. Jacobsen, 185  
 Gelatine, Condition of sparingly Soluble Substances in, Dr. T. R. Bolam, 222; Dr. S. C. Bradford; Dr. B. N. Desai, 223  
 Gene, The, and the Theory of Living Structures, Dr. C. B. Bridges, 991  
 van Gent's Short Period Variable, H. L. Alden, 641  
*Géographie, La*, the name of, changed to *Terre Air Mer*, 671  
 Geography: Modern, The Groundwork of, an Introduction to the Science of Geography, Dr. A. Wilmore. Third edition, 955  
 Geological Survey of India, 885  
 Geologie: der Steinkohlenlager, A. Dannenberg, 816; Lehrbuch der. Teil 3: Geologische Länderkunde (Regionale Geologie), Prof. F. X. Schaffer. Lief. 1, 956  
 Geology: A Century of, Prof. J. W. Gregory, 531, 857; Historical, Outlines of, Prof. C. Schuchert. Second edition, 513; of Ardnamurchan, North-west Mull and Coll, The, J. E. Richey and others, 619; Physical, Outlines of, Prof. C. R. Longwell, 513; Plants and, 559  
 Geometric Considerations for Periodical Analysis, M. Lombardini, 1050  
 Geometrie, Vorlesungen über Grundlagen der, Prof. K. Reidemeister, 626  
 Geometry: Analytical, The Elements of, J. I. Craig. Vol. 1: Straight Line and Circle, 52; and Induction, Foundations of, J. Nicod. Translated by P. P. Wiener, 430  
 Geophysical: Prospecting: The Principles and Practice of, being the Report of the Imperial Geophysical Experimental Survey, edited by A. B. Broughton Edge and Prof. T. H. Laby, 427; Surveying, Modern Methods of, 634  
 German: Bunsen Society in Vienna, The, Prof. F. Paneth. Translated by Dr. R. W. Lawson, 94; Glaciation, 394; University System, The, 845  
 Germany, The Dissemination of Scientific Information in, 833  
 Giant Crescents: a New Stone Age Industry from South Africa, C. van Riet Lowe, 36  
 Glaciers, The Melting of, Dr. W. J. Humphreys, 911  
 Glass: Coloured, as a deterrent to House Flies, Chance Bros. and Co., Ltd., 277; -making, The History of, Sir Richard Gregory, 697; Optical, Manufacture, Recent Developments in, W. M. Hampton and W. N. Wheat, 926  
 Glasses: Modern, at the Science Museum, 765; The Ultra-Violet Transmission of, P. Gilard, 846  
 Globin with Haematin of various Origins, Combination of, J. Roche and A. Bendrihem, 646  
 Glow: Discharge, Cathode Phenomena in the, Prof. A. Güntherschulze and F. Keller, 840; -worm, Spectrum of, Dr. L. A. Ramdas and L. P. Venkiteshwaran, 726; -worms, Light of, Dr. M. Perkins, 905  
 Glözel alleged Antiquities, The, 60  
 Glucuronic Acid, The Pyranoid Structure of, and of Theophylline Arabinoside, J. Pryde and R. T. Williams, 187  
 Glutathione, Relation of, to Cell Respiration with special reference to Hepatic Tissue, Sir F. Gowland Hopkins and K. A. C. Elliott, 805  
 Glykoside: Die, Chemische Monographie der Pflanzenglykoside, Dr. J. J. L. van Rijn. Zweite Auflage von Prof. H. Dieterle, 959  
 Gmelin Handbuch der anorganischen Chemie: Achte Auflage. System-Nummer 59: Eisen. Teil A, Lief. 3; Teil B, Lief. 3, 657; System-Nummer 26: Beryllium. System-Nummer 58: Kobalt. Teil B: Die Ammine des Kobalts, 816  
 Gold: Colloidal, Magnetism of, V. I. Vaidhianathan and Balwant Singh, 302; -copper: Alloys, Transformations in the, J. L. Haughton and R. J. M. Payne, 554; Solid Solutions, Physico-Chemical Study of the, N. S. Kurnakow and N. W. Ageew, 554; Organic Compounds of, Gibson and Colles, 840; Resources of the World, Dr. W. Cullen, 4  
 Goldfish, Scales in, Transformation of, Yasumasa Mori, 119  
 Golgi Substance, Nature of, D. H. Tennant, M. S. Gardiner, and D. E. Smith, 728  
 Gondwana System, The, Dr. C. S. Fox, 763  
 Government Chemist, Report of the, 791  
*Graf Zeppelin*, The Arctic Cruise of the, 490  
 Graham, George, F.R.S., 1673-1751, 435  
*Granulobacter pectinovorum*, Influence of the Associated Bacteria on the Nitrogen Régime of, M. Korsakova and E. Nikitina, 387  
 Gravels in the New Forest Area, Age of Certain: N. C. Burkitt, 222; H. J. E. Peake, 377  
 Gravitation and Electricity, The Unitary Theory of, (3), P. Straneo, 1050  
 Gravity Anomalies, Major E. A. Glennie, 1004  
 Gray, John, Jubilee Scholarship, award of the, to G. A. Thompson, 805  
 Great: Britain, Distribution of Urban Population in, Prof. C. B. Fawcett, 1070; Nebula in Orion, Distance of the, Dr. R. J. Trumpler, 73  
 Greek Mathematics, A Manual of, Sir Thomas L. Heath, 739  
 Green Auroral Line, Excitation of the, Prof. J. Kaplan, 304  
 Greenland: Cod, The, 731; Ice-cap, Thickness of the, 296; Whale and Narwhal, Migrations of the, Dr. R. W. Gray, 798  
 Grid System, Subsidiary Systems in connexion with the, P. V. Hunter, 633  
 Grignard's Reagent, Action of, on *N*-methyl Pyrrolidon, R. Lukes, 127  
 Grotte d'Isturitz, La, I: Le Magdalénien de la Salle de Saint-Martin, Dr. R. de Saint-Périer, 988



- Grouse, White Hen, A Protected, 102  
 Guano, Decomposition of, P. R. v. d. R. Copeman and F. J. Dillman, 682  
 Guarana, The Active Principle of, G. Bertrand and P. de Berredo Carneiro, 555  
 Guayra Falls of the Parana, The, E. C. Rashleigh, 549  
 Gun-cottons, a Method of Studying the Decomposition of, at the Ordinary Temperature, M. Lambrey, 1050  
 Gyroscope, Mechanics of the, Prof. R. F. Deimal, 289
- Hadzapi, The, or Watindega of Tanganyika, Miss D. F. Bleek, 379  
 Halkine Institute, Report of the, 1929, 220  
 Hail Storm, June 14, at Doncaster, N. L. Silvester, 35  
 Hairs: and Wools, Prof. J. Glaister, 227; So-called, in the Ampullar Organs of Fish Ears, Movements of the, R. E. Bowen, 280  
 Hakemite Tables of Ebn Jounis, The, J. H. Reynolds, 913  
 Hamilton, Sir William Rowan: Influence of the Work of, on Modern Mathematical Thought, Prof. A. W. Conway, 198; The Mathematical Papers of, Vol. 1: Geometrical Optics. Edited by Prof. A. W. Conway and Prof. J. L. Synge, 167  
 Hamilton's 'Characteristic Function', A. S. Ramsey, 167  
 Hanbury Memorial Medal of the Pharmaceutical Society, Presentation of the, to Prof. H. Thoms, 667  
 Hand-Spinning in Egypt and the Sudan, Mrs. Grace M. Crowfoot, 71  
 Hannah Dairy Research Institute, Dr. J. D. Stirling appointed to the Staff of, 81  
 Harrison's, John, Third Time-keeper, 381  
 Harvard: Museum Expedition to Australia, The, Prof. J. Stanley Gardiner, 457; University Geological Expedition in the Canadian Rockies, 1929 (3), E. Paréjas, 235  
 Harvester-thresher Machine Trials, Results of, 754  
 Haulage Accidents in Collieries, Report on, 101  
 Hawaii, Biological Research in, C. H. Edmundson, C. M. Cooke, jun., and H. E. Crampton, 36  
 Hawaiian: Lavas, Radium in, C. S. Piggot, 840; Temples, Dr. W. C. Bennett, 497; Volcano Observatory, Work at the, Prof. T. A. Jaggar, 1036  
 Hawksley, Thomas, Lecture, The, Ll. B. Atkinson, 865  
 Health: and Hygiene Charts, Dr. Winslow, with Descriptive Booklet by Prof. V. H. Mottram, 113; and Physik: Sixty Centuries of, the Progress of Ideas from Primitive Magic to Modern Medicine, S. G. B. Stubbs and E. W. Bligh, 939; Ministry of, Annual Report of the, 577; Public, To-day and To-morrow, Dr. W. G. Willoughby, 143  
 Heat: Engine, A New, J. F. J. Malone, 80; Insulation of Furnaces, J. B. Barnitt and R. H. Heilman, 971  
 Heavens, The, and the Universe, Prof. O. Thomas. Translated by B. Miall, 244  
 Hele-Shaw's Method, The Extension of, to Cyclic Movements, Mme. V. Popovitch-Schneider, 386  
 Helgoland und die Zerstörung seiner Felsküste durch das Meer, O. Pratje, 657  
 Heliometer, Accuracy of the, Prof. de Sitter, 274  
 Helium and its Properties, Lord Rutherford, 137  
*Helix aspersa*, the Common Snail, Outgrowths from Pieces of, Prof. J. B. Gatenby, 1002  
 Henry, Joseph, Edith W. Stone, 542  
 Hermann, Otto, Medal of the Hungarian Ornithological Society, Award of the, to Dr. W. Stone, 670  
 Herring and Plankton, Distribution of, R. E. Savage, 1079  
 Herschel's Mirrors, Sir William, Capt. M. A. Ainslie, 1007  
 High: Frequency and very High Frequency Currents, The Comparative Biological Properties of, J. Saidman, 1013; Resistance, A Spark Method of Measuring, J. A. C. Teegan, 585; Vacua, Dr. S. Dushman, 72; Voltages, Measurement of, Prof. W. M. Thornton, 875  
 Hiroshima University, *Journal of Science of the*, Series B, Div. 1 (Zoology), part 1, 64  
 Hoba (South-West Africa), the Largest Known Meteorite, Dr. L. J. Spencer, 42  
*Homo sapiens* and African Prehistory, E. J. Wayland, 1003  
 Hong Kong: Horticultural Society, Occasional Notes of the, No. 1, 146; *Naturalist*, May, 331  
 Hormones, Oestrus-producing, Dr. G. F. Marrian and A. Butenandt, 305  
 Horticultural Abstracts, pt. 1, 265  
 Housesteads National Park, A Suggested, Dr. Vaughan Cornish, 934  
 Huddersfield Technical College, Dr. J. Ward appointed head of the Department of Civil and Mechanical Engineering, 916  
 Hudson Bay: and Strait, Navigable Conditions in, 995; Region and the North-West Territories of Canada, Development of the, Dr. Brysson Cunningham, 53  
 Hull: Museums, Additions made to the, 113; University College, Fisheries Research at, 1032  
 Human: Body, The, Dr. L. Clendening. Second edition, 173; Embryology, Dr. G. Streeter, 804; Genetics, Research in, a Committee to consider, 183; Population, Discussion on, 577; Scale, From the, to the Terrestrial Scale, R. Wavre, 236; Skeleton: The Origin of the, an Introduction to Human Osteology, Dr. R. Broom, 4; Skulls and Bones from the Naga Hills, Dr. B. S. Guha and P. C. Basu, 762  
 Humanity: Science and, 505; under the Hammer, Lt.-Col. E. Kitson Clarke, 790  
 Humidity: Control and Entomological Problems, Dr. P. A. Buxton, 1079; in the Upper Air, Graphical Indication of, Dr. C. W. B. Normand, 583  
 Hunger and Love, L. Britton, 475  
 Hurricane in British Honduras, 543  
 Hydraulics, A New Principle of, M. Golaz, 646  
 Hydrazine: and Semicarbazide, The Oxidation of, by Potassium Iodate, V. Hovorka, 1013; Ultra-Violet Absorption and Raman Effect for, S. Imanishi, 64  
 Hydrocarbons: Slow Combustion of, Dr. R. Spence, 873; The Peroxidation of, during Combustion in Air, Dr. E. Mardles, 116  
 Hydro-Electric Power Development, Influence of Modern, on the British Coal Trade, Dr. Brysson Cunningham, 397  
 Hydrogen: Absorption of, The Critical Increment of the, on Amorphous Carbon at 400°-520° C., Dr. F. E. T. Kingman, 272; Activated Adsorption of, by Zinc and Chromium Oxides, Prof. H. S. Taylor, 636; and Oxygen, Combination of, W. L. Garstang and H. L. Hinshelwood, 1044; Influence of, on Chemical Changes in Silica Vessels, Prof. M. W. Travers, L. E. Hockin, and T. J. P. Pearce, 66; Iodide, Photochemical Decomposition of, Rollefson and Booher, 72; Ion Concentration: of Natural Waters, A New Colorimetric Method for measuring the, Daphne L. Coulston, 316; of Sea-water, Variations of the, Daphne L. Coulston, 316; The Measurement of, Dr. J. Grant, 852; -Nitrous Oxide Flame, Spectrum of the, Prof. A. Fowler and J. S. Badami, 881; Resonance Spectrum of, Prof. K. R. Rao and J. S. Badami, 585; Sulphide and Sulphur Dioxide, Reaction between, Prof. Basur Sanjiva Rao and M. R. Aswathnarayana Rao, 413  
 Hydrogenating Cracking of Phenols, Mode of Action of Dehydrating Catalysts in the, A. Kling and D. Florentin, 1050  
 Hydrogenation, Catalysed, The Velocity of, A. Kailin and H. C. Hardt, 467  
 Hydrographic Surveying, Modern, The Physical Basis of, A. L. Shalowitz, 1014  
 Hydroxylic Compounds, Identification of, Morgan and Pettet, 37  
 Hygiene Exhibition, An International, at Dresden, 298  
 Hyperbolics: Elementary, for Technical and other Students; especially adapted to the Requirements of Beginners, M. E. J. Gheury de Bray. 2 vols., 1026  
 Hyperfine Structure: Isotopic Displacement in, J. H. Bartlett, Jr., 408; of Lines, Charges of Intensity in the, H. Schüler and J. E. Keyston, 911; of Thallium II, Dr. J. B. Green and J. Wulff, 409
- Ice: Cooling Effects of, on the Oceans, E. H. Smith, 840; Rinks, Artificial, 489  
 Iceland, the Petrology of (2), G. W. Tyrrell and M. A. Peacock, 881  
 Identification Method, A New, Dr. T. Poole, 904  
 Idu (Japan) Earthquake of Nov. 26, 1930, The, Dr. C. Davison, 552



- Illumination** : and Tree Growth, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins and Florence A. Stanbury, 191 ; Congress, The International, 588, 642 ; Dr. A. R. Meyer elected President for 1934, 643 ; Device for Microscopy, A New, E. Leitz, 1010 ; in Factories, Dr. N. Goldstern and Dr. F. Putnok, 1080
- Immunity** : Reactions, The Study of Specific Combination in, J. R. Marrack and F. Campbell Smith, 1077 ; Studies in, Prof. J. M. Beattie, 888
- Imperial** : Bureau of Soil Science, resignation of the Deputy Directorship of the, by Dr. A. F. Joseph, 220 ; Cancer Research Fund, Report of the, 931 ; Horticultural Conference, Proceedings of the, 220 ; Institute, Annual Report, 16 ; Sugar Cane Research Conference, 1931, 160
- India** : Archaeological Service in, Proposed Changes in the, 216 ; Education in, in 1928-29, 197 ; Entomology in, The Study of, 767 ; Geological Survey of, 885 ; Irrigation in, 1928-29, 37 ; Lectures on the Races and Cultures of, 216 ; Survey of, Report of Map Publication and Office Work of the, 1929-30, 30 ; Zoological Survey of, 849
- Indian** : Archaeology in Eastern Canada, W. J. Wintemberg, 1005 ; Butterflies, Mimicry in, Dev Raj Puri, 459 ; Coal, Utilisation and Conservation of, C. H. McCale, 219 ; Education Problem, The, J. C. Ghosh, 681 ; Ethnography, 50 ; Insects, Catalogue of, Part 18, H. E. Andrews, 867 ; Institute of Science : F. N. Mowdawalla appointed Professor of Electrical technology in the, 197 ; Extension of Service of Dr. M. O. Forster as Director ; appointment of Dr. V. Subrahmanyam as Professor of Biochemistry, 1049 ; *Journal of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry*, Part 1, 299 ; Mosses, Census of, P. Brühl, 182 ; Place-names, Rai Bahadur Hira Lal, 839 ; Terracottas, K. de B. Codrington, 414
- Indians** : of Pecos Pueblo : The, a Study of their Skeletal Remains, Dr. E. A. Hooton, and others, 740 ; We, the Passing of a Great Race. Being the Recollections of the last of the Great Indian Chiefs, Big Chief White Horse Eagle, as told to Edgar von Schmidt-Pauli. Translated by C. Turner, 891
- India's Debt to Faraday**, Sir C. V. Raman, 362
- Indium and Thallium**, Arc Spectrum of, Fine Structure in the, Dr. A. L. Narayan, 675
- Indo-China**, the Tectites of, A. Lacroix, 386
- Industrial** : and Social Economics, 773 ; Problems of Today, Some, S. Rowntree, 331
- Industry** : and Rationalisation, Research in, A. Y. Enström, 122 ; Creative Science and, 317 ; University Training in Relation to, 1017 ; Value of Research Methods in, Steatite and Porcelain Products, Ltd., 1033
- Infection by Air**, Experiment on, A. Trillat, 235
- Infections** : Ectromelia, The Causative Organism in, J. E. Barnard and W. J. Eلفord, 917 ; Diseases, The Problem of making Conditions unsuited to, Prof. N. J. G. Smith, 801
- Infra-Red** : Radiation from an Engine, An Investigation of, S. Steele, 185 ; Rays, Therapeutic Uses of, W. A. Troup, 953
- Insect-borne Diseases**, Disappearance of, from Britain, Dr. Ll. Lloyd, 798 ; Control in the United States and Canada, 146 ; Metamorphosis, Effects of Inadequate Feeding on, C. Dover, 303 ; Dr. Hem Singh Pruthi, 869 ; Relations of Plant Virus Diseases, Dr. Kenneth Smith, 915 ; Vectors and Virus Diseases of Plants, Dr. K. M. Smith, 379
- Insects** : and Climate, 689 ; specially Injurious to Cultivation in French Switzerland, J. and L. Deshusses, 467
- Instinct and Intuition** : a Study in Mental Duality, G. B. Dibblee, 51
- Instituts Nationaux à l'Étranger**, The Organisation and Activities of, 63
- Insulin** : Molecular Weight of, Sjögren and Svedberg, 380 ; Therapy, British Drug Houses, Ltd. ; Allen and Hanburys, Ltd., 461
- Intelligence**, Environment, and Heredity, Prof. R. W. Wilcocks, 801
- Interferential Level**, An, without an Air Bubble, C. Fabry, 466, Internal : Combustion Engine : Power and the, Prof. W. E. Dalby, 886 ; The, and its Performance, W. A. Tookey, 634 ; The High-speed, H. R. Ricardo. New Edition, 886 ; Secretion, The Physiology of, Sir E. Sharpey-Schafer, 437, 441
- International** : Aspects of Agriculture, 597 ; Astronomical Union (Union Astronomique Internationale) Report of Commission 3 : Atlas céleste, E. Delporte, 690 ; Bibliographical Guide, Forthcoming, 936 ; Congress for the Testing of Materials, 643 ; Dr. W. Rosenhain elected President for 1935, 644 ; Congress of Pure and Allied Chemistry, the Forthcoming, 901 ; Congress of the History of Science and Technology, The, Dr. T. Greenwood, 77 ; Council of Scientific Unions, Dr. G. Hale elected President of the, 111 ; Dairy Congress, The Ninth, 145 ; Geological Congress, Postponement of the, till 1933, 61, 698 ; Illumination Congress, The, 588, 642 ; Dr. A. R. Meyer elected President for 1934, 643 ; Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Grant to the, by the Rockefeller Foundation, 265 ; Agriculture, The, Dr. A. Hobson, 737 ; Polar Year, A Second, 754 ; Union for Geodesy and Geophysics. Section of Terrestrial Magnetism and Electricity. Comptes rendus de l'Assemblée de Stockholm, 1035 ; Union of Physics, Brussels Meeting, 1931, 485 ; Standards of Lighting, 1083
- Intestinal Juice and of the Pancreatic Juice**, The Proteolytic Ferments of the, E. Le Breton, F. Mocorrea, and E. Stulz, 422
- Intrammon and Locron**, Two New Reagents, 1035
- Iodide**, The Oxidation of, by Persulphate, King and Jacobs, 121
- Ionised Gases and the Working of Valves with Positive Grid**, and V. Ionescu, 882
- Ions**, Negative : Prof. H. D. Smyth, 677 ; Photoelectrons and, Dr. J. L. Hamshire, 871
- Irish Radium Committee**, Report for 1930, 756
- Iron and Steel**, Non-Metallic Inclusions in, Dr. C. Benedicks and H. Löfquist, 856 ; Compounds in Yeast Complex, Oxidation Reduction Potential of, T. B. Coolidge, 223 ; Dipped into Aerated Saline Solutions, the Protection by Cathode Polarisation, E. Herzog and G. Chandron, 882 ; Nitride, Atomic Hydrogen occluded in, Shun-ichi Satoh, 457 ; The Passivity of, U. R. Evans, 1062
- Islam**, Sociology of, An Introduction to the, R. Levy, 951
- Isotope Effect in the Band Spectrum of Lithium Hydride**, Prof. G. Nakamura, 759
- Isotopes** : of Lead : Nuclear Moments of the, Relative Values of the  $g(L)$  Factors of Pb(207) and Tl, Prof. J. C. McLennan, M. F. Crawford, and L. B. Leppard, 301 ; of Lithium, Sodium, and Potassium, K. T. Bainbridge, 876
- Isotopes**, Prediction of, H. L. Johnston ; H. C. Urey, 498
- Italian** : Physicists and Faraday's Researches, Prof. V. Volterra, 342 ; Royal Geographical Society, Gold Medal and Diploma of the, Presentation of, to Sir Hubert Wilkins, 184
- Ives**, Frederick, Medal of the Optical Society of America, award of the, to Prof. T. Lyman, 834
- Janssen**, Jules, 1824-1907, 239
- Japan**, Larval Freshwater Shrimps from, Dr. Zu Yokoya, 874
- Japanese** : Earthquake of 1923, The, Dr. C. Davison, 989 ; Morning Glory, Genetics of, Yoshitaka Imai, 497 ; Nematodes, Dr. Shigemoto Imamura, 586
- Jaws and Teeth**, Evolutionary Tendencies in the, Prof. G. Elliot Smith, 501
- Jeanne d'Arc**, The Trial of, a Complete Translation of the Text of the Original Documents, with an Introduction, by W. P. Barrett, 284
- Jet-wave Rectifier**, The, J. Hartmann, 156
- Jewels**, Pivots and, V. Stott, 273
- Joan of Arc**, The Psychological Problem of, 284
- Jolliffe and Banks**, Contractors, The Work of, H. W. Dickinson, 698
- Joshua** : Judges, Prof. J. Garstang, 938
- Jumping Negative Glow**, The, W. A. Leyshon, 795
- Jungfrauoch Scientific Station**, The, 817
- Jungle-fowl at the Zoological Society's Gardens**, 180



- Jupiter: Rapid Current on, B. Peek, 192; The Faint Outer Satellites of, Prof. M. Wolf, 912  
Jupiter's Satellites, Mutual Eclipses of, 876
- Kansas Permian Insects, Dr. R. J. Tillyard, 414  
Kaolin Minerals, C. S. Ross and P. F. Kerr, 875  
Karité Butter, Composition of, J. Bougault and G. Schuster, 682  
Katwe Crater-lake, The, Uganda, E. J. Wayland, 977  
Kelvin Lecture, Prof. W. L. Bragg, 210, 248  
Kelvin's "On the Clustering of Gravitational Matter in any Part of the Universe", Dr. M. C. Grabham, 793  
Kenya: Colony, The Stone Age Cultures of, Dr. L. S. B. Leakey. With Appendices by J. D. Solomon, C. E. P. Brooks, A. T. Hopwood, H. C. Beck, and M. Connolly, 1019; Early Man in, 1019  
Keratin Molecule, Constitution of the, J. B. Speakman and Mercia C. Hirst, 1073  
Kew, Royal Botanic Gardens, J. S. L. Gilmour appointed assistant director of the, 756  
Kidney, Work of the, in the Production of Urine, H. Borsook and H. M. Winegarden, 83  
Kikuyu Girls, The Marriage of, Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, 696  
Kilimandjaro: Der, sein Land und seine Menschen, Dr. W. Geilinger, 956  
Kish, Human Remains from, Dr. L. H. Dudley Buxton and D. T. Rice, 798  
Knowledge: A New Summary of, Prof. F. S. Marvin, 937; Modern, An Outline of, edited by Dr. W. Rose, 937  
Kohle: Der Chemie der, Dr. W. Fuchs, 1024; Entstehung, Veredlung und Verwertung der, W. Petrascheck and others. Herausgegeben von Prof. K. A. Redlich, Prof. J. C. Breine und H. Tropsch, 1024  
Krypton and Xenon, F. J. Allen and R. B. Moore, 380
- Labrador, Coast of, Uncharted State of Part of the, Sir Wilfred Grenfell, 635  
Lake: Baikal, Some New Marine Infusoria Symbiotic in Molluscs of, E. Cheisin, 163; Gusinoe, Transbaikalia, Periodic Variations in the Level and in the Chemical Composition of the Water of, A. Zachvatkin, 422  
Lancashire and Cheshire Coal Research Association, opening of New Laboratories of the, 580  
Lange (Prof. J.), translated by Charlotte Haldane, Crime as Destiny: a Study of Criminal Twins, 630  
Lankester, late Sir Ray, Work of the, Prof. E. S. Goodrich, 64  
'Lapides palmati', The, mentioned in the "Historia Naturalis" of the Elder Pliny, Dr. K. C. Bailey, 672  
La Tène Spear-head from the Thames, A late, T. D. Kendrick, 586  
Lavoisier, Priestley and, Sir Philip Hartog, 797  
Law, Oriental and Tropical, The Study of, 265  
Lead: Alloys: Effects of Cold-rolling and of Heat-treatment of some, H. Waterhouse and R. Willows, 502; The Spectrographic Assay of some, D. M. Smith, 554; and Iron, Penetrating Corpuscular Radiation in, Absorption and Diffusion of the, B. Rossi, 806; Isotopes of, Nuclear Moments of the, Relative Values of the  $g(I)$  Factors of Pb(207) and Tl, Prof. J. C. McLennan, M. F. Crawford, and L. B. Leppard, 301; The Spectrographic Assay of some Alloys of, D. M. Smith, 802  
Leaf Fall in the Tropics, R. E. Holtum, 798  
Leather Crafts Manual, Ivy Evelyn Norman and P. I. Smith, 1060  
Leathers, Examination of Dyed, in Cases of alleged Dermatitis, T. Callan and N. Strafford, 733  
Leeds University: Additional Grant by the West Yorkshire Coal Owners' Association, 41; conferment of Honorary Doctorates, 80; institution of a Diploma in Public Administration, 278  
Leibniz: The Monadology of, with an Introduction, Commentary, and Supplementary Essays, Dr. H. Wildon Carr, 136  
Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Extension of the, 936  
*Lemna*: Chemical Composition of, as a Specific Character, V. Vernadskij and A. Vinogradov, 770; The Chemical Composition of, as Characteristic of the Species, V. Vernadskij and A. Vinogradov, 882  
Lens, The Calculation of a, G. Vitali, 1050  
*Lepidocyclina*, *L. hamiltonensis*, and *L. howchini*, New Species of, F. Chapman and Irene Crespin, 683  
*Lepidosiren*, The Double Lateral Line of, J. T. Cunningham, 377  
*Lepomis*, Relative Effectiveness of Spectral Radiation for the Vision of the Sun-fish, H. Grundfest, 555  
Let's Help! a Collection of Good Causes, Sir Charles Bright, 989  
Levigator with a Motionless Liquid Medium, A. E. Joukowsky, 734  
Liapounov, A. M., 1857-1918, A. J. Pressland, 138  
Lichenin, Prof. J. Reilly, M. Hayes, and P. J. Drumm, 162  
Life: and Matter, Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, 723; Outlines of General Biology, Sir J. Arthur Thomson and Prof. P. Geddes. 2 vols., 1056; Science and Philosophy of, Prof. J. Ritchie, 1056; The Origin of, G. Rumbold. Second impression, 243  
Light: Intensities, The Translation of, into Sound Intensities, G. Fournier, 234; Intensity in Two Common Vegetation Types in Tropical Africa, Photochemical Measurements of, J. Philip, J. D. Scott, and J. Y. Moggridge, 162; Quanta, Spin of, Sir C. V. Raman and S. Bhagavantam, 727; Scattered by Liquids, The Fine Structure of Spectral Lines of, S. Rafałowski, 495; -scattering: Doppler Effect in, Sir C. V. Raman, 636; in Liquids, S. Venkateswaran, 870; Spin of, Experimental Demonstration of, Sir C. V. Raman and S. Bhagavantam, 576; The Angular Momentum of, Sir C. V. Raman, 545; The Deflection of, in the Sun's Gravitational Field, Prof. E. Freundlich, 993; The Penetration of, through Successive Layers of Tissue Paper, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins, 545; Transmission through Fog, H. G. Houghton, 1043; Velocity of: Dr. V. S. Vrkljan, 269; from the Spiral Nebulae, G. Strömberg, 587  
Lighting: International Standards of, 1083; Units, Testing of Combinations of, D. C. Rose, 1034  
Lightning: Ball, Charged Aerosols and, W. C. Reynolds, 584; Branching of, Dr. B. F. J. Schonland and Dr. T. E. Allibone, 794; Major J. L. P. Macnair, 969; Correlations between the Field Changes due to, and the Appearance of the Flashes, E. L. Halliday, 200; Discharge, Duration and Magnitude of a, R. S. J. Spilsbury, 872; Phenomena, Dr. B. F. J. Schonland, 799; Unusual, H. E. Beckett and A. F. Dufton, 189; Capt. C. J. P. Cave, 378  
Liming and Fertility, 1080  
Limnological Laboratory, Reports from the, (2), R. Southern and A. C. Gardiner, 1013  
Limonites, Artificial Magnetisation of, F. Loewinson-Lessing, V. Mitkevitch, and A. Turcev, 127  
Linear Partial Differential Equations, An Operational Method for the Solution of, W. O. Kermack and W. H. McCrea, 882  
Linnaeus, The Influence of, upon Gilbert White, Dr. K. Hagberg, 332  
Linseed Oil, Composition of, N. E. Cocchinaras, 1086  
Lion Farm, A, at El Monte, U.S.A., 578  
Lipetsk Area, The Origin of the Ferrous Deposits in the, A. Archangelskii and D. Perkin, 163  
Lipoid Nephrosis: Blood Serum in, Some Physical Properties of the, C. Achard and A. Boutaric, 315; The Physical Properties of the Serum Proteins and of the Hypodermic Serosities in, C. Achard, A. Boutaric, and A. Arcand, 646  
Liquation Phenomena in a Coinage Bronze, A. Borloz, 734  
Liquid: Drops in Electric Fields, Dr. W. A. Macky, 799; Mixtures, Diamagnetism of, V. C. G. Trew and Prof. J. F. Spencer, 152; Dr. H. Buchner, 301; Prof. E. van Aubel, 455; S. Ramachandra Rao and G. Sivaramakrishnan, 872  
Liquids, Viscosity of, Prof. G. W. Stewart, 727; Prof. E. N. da C. Andrade, 835  
Lister Institute: Dr. T. F. Macrae appointed a Research Student in Biochemistry at the, 197; Report for 1931, 1009  
Lithium: Constitution of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 149; Hydride, Isotope Effect in the Band Spectrum of, Prof. G. Nakamura, 759; Metallic, The Excitation Potentials of, Dr. H. W. B. Skinner, 114



- Lithothamnion* in the South Indian Cretaceous, Occurrence of, Prof. L. Rama Rao, 225, 873  
 "Live and let Live", 329  
 Liverwort, A, as Pioneer on Burnt Forest Land, 37  
 Load-gauge, A remote Electrically Recording, for Wheel-impact Measurements, Dr F. Aughtie, 918  
 Lobatsi-Linokana Area, The Herpetological Fauna of the, J. H. Power, 126  
 Locomotive Laboratory, A, 63  
 Locomotives, Articulated, Prof. L. Wiener, 289  
 Locron, Intrammon and, two new Reagents, 1035  
 Logarithmic Potential, Certain Problems on the Limits of the Theory of, E. Okhlopkova, 43  
 Logarithms, Addition-Subtraction, to Five Decimal Places, L. M. Berkeley, 91  
 Logarithmer of Antilogarithmer, Femcifrede, A. K. Erlang, Udgivet ved R. E. H. Rasmussen, 91  
 Logic: Formal: A Treatise of, its Evolution and Main Branches, with its Relations to Mathematics and Philosophy, Prof. Jørgen-Jørgensen. 3 vols., 1021; The Development of, Dr. T. Greenwood, 1021; Textbook of, Prof. A. Wolf, 6  
 L'Ologénèse: nouvelle théorie de l'évolution et de la distribution géographique des êtres vivants, Prof. D. Rosa. Adapté de l'italien par l'auteur, 429  
 London: and the Advancement of Science, 687; and the British Association, 687; City of, Science in the, Engr.-Capt. E. C. Smith, 515; Mathematical Society, election of officers, 868; Skull, The, C. N. Bromhead, 118; University: Bequest by J. F. H. Knight, 80; Conferment of a Doctorate, 124; Prof. C. Burt appointed Professor of Psychology at University College; renewal of the Sir George Jessel Studentship in Mathematics to T. E. Garstang; and award of the same Studentship to H. Kestelman, 161; conferment of Doctorates, 313; Dr. F. C. Benham appointed University Reader in Commerce, 804; R. J. V. Pulverstaf appointed University Reader in Pathology; conferment of Title of Reader on Dr. Nora Edkins, 805; conferment of Title of Professor on F. W. Twort, Dr. H. A. Harris, and Dr. F. A. P. Aveling, and that of Reader in Eugenics on Miss E. M. Elderton, 975; conferment of Honorary Doctorates, 1011  
 Longshaw Estate, Acquisition of the, by the National Trust, 29  
 Lord Mayor's Show, Progress of Industry aided by Science illustrated in the, 824  
 Loudspeaker Frequency Response Curves, Subjective Interpretation of, in terms of Loudness, D. A. Oliver, 268  
 Loud Speakers, Lanchester's, 669  
 Low Temperature Carbonisation Test, 841  
 Lubricating Layers, Adhesion of, to Metals, A. Boutaric and R. Amiot, 882  
 Ludicrous, The Paradox of the, Prof. S. S. Seward, 988  
 Lunar Circles, 416
- d*-Mannitol and *d*-Mannose, An X-ray Examination of, G. W. McCrea, 882  
*d*-Mannose, The Oxidation Products of, by Ammoniacal Copper Oxide in the presence of Air, at the Ordinary Temperature, J. Parrod and Mlle. Y. Garreau, 1050  
 Macdonnell Ranges, The, C. T. Madigan, 1006  
 Machine Drawing and Design: a Textbook of Intermediate Standard for Engineering Students, W. Abbott, 962  
 Magdalenian Deposits near Frangy (Haute Savoie), Discovery of, A. Jayet and G. Amoudruz, 1087  
 Magical Belief and Practice, 204  
 Magnesium: Alloys, Protection of, against Corrosion, H. Sutton and L. F. Le Brocq, 502; Pure, Preparation of, by Sublimation, J. Hérenguel and G. Chaudron, 1013  
 Magnetic: Birefringence, A New Type of, Sir C. V. Raman and S. W. Chinchalkar, 758; Field, Alternating High-Frequency, A Method of Measuring an, F. Esclangon, 882; Phenomena: an Elementary Treatise, Prof. S. R. Williams, 623; Polarisation, Rotatory, Prof. E. van Aubel, 1004; Poles, Isolated Quantised, Prof. O. W. Richardson, 582  
 Magnetisation, Energy of, A New Relation between Electrical Resistance and, Prof. W. Gerlach and E. Englert, 151  
 Magnetism: and Electricity: School Certificate, Dr. H. Toms, 431; E. Nightingale, 959; Electricity and, A Connexion between, Dr. P. A. M. Dirac, 586; Modern Views on, Prof. W. Peddie, 623  
 Magneto: -Electric Saturation Effect, The, Dr. O. E. Frivold and S. Koch, 675; -Optics and their Development, Faraday's Researches on, Prof. P. Zeeman, 365  
 Maize: in South Africa, A. R. Saunders, 1060; Supernumerary Cell Divisions in, G. W. Beadle, 191  
 Maladies, L'Esprit et ses, Dr. M. Nathan, 6  
 Malaria in South Africa, Prof. N. H. Swellengrebel, 497  
 Malarial Infection in Human Beings, The Prevention of, Col. S. P. James, W. D. Nicol, and P. G. Shute, 404  
 Malaya, Rubber Research Institute of, Report of the, 880  
 Malayan *Aleurites Montana*, Oil from, and the Properties of Hong Kong oil, T. H. Barry, 1086  
 Maleic Acid into Fumaric Acid, A Possible Transformation of, H. Saini and J. Weigl, 235  
 Mallard, Eclipse Plumage in the, Violet K. Tallent, 672  
 Mammals: Certain Extinct, The Auditory Region in, Dr. van der Klaauw, 910; of an Island Group (Pityusa), Dr. O. Koller, 414  
 Mammoth Remains, Fossilised, near Nottingham, 993  
 Man: and the Primates, Prof. A. H. Schultz, 1043; and the Stars, Prof. H. T. Stetson, 615; Early, His Origin, Development, and Culture, Prof. G. Elliot Smith, Sir Arthur Keith, Dr. F. G. Parsons, M. C. Burkitt, H. J. E. Peake, Dr. J. L. Myres, 951  
 Manchester University, conferment of honorary degree on Prof. E. Fiddes and Prof. F. E. Weiss, 916  
 Manganese, An Electro-Colorimetric Method for the Determination of Small Quantities of, K. Nenadkevici, 770  
 Mann und Weib: Die Beschneidung bei, ihre Geschichte, Psychologie und Ethnologie, F. Bryk, 91  
 Manoa, Social Organisation in, Miss Margaret Mead, 414  
 Man's: Family Tree, The Construction of, Sir Arthur Keith, 590; Remote Ancestry, Prof. G. Elliot Smith, 4  
 Manured or Artificially Fertilised Soil, Biological Value of the Products of, G. Tallarico, 595  
 Marine: Algæ from the Pacific, W. A. Setchell and N. L. Gardner, 191; Biology: and the Problems of the Fishing Industry, The Correlation between, Dr. C. von Bonde, 801; Contributions to, 172; Boiler Design: Charts and Data on, a Summary of the Standard Formulæ in Chart Form with Tables and Notes, H. C. Walker, 962; Boilers, Faraday and, 1031; Engineers, Institute of, *Transactions* of the, 63; Fauna of the Plymouth District. Second edition, 936  
 Marugin Warfare, W. L. Warner, 910  
 Mason and Dixon's Line, Col. T. T. P. Luger, 995  
 Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Research Work at the, 384  
 Mass Production, Sir Eric Geddes, 182  
 Materials: and Structures: a Text-book for Engineering Students, Dr. E. H. Salmon. Vol. 1: The Elasticity and Strength of Materials, 617; Strength of, Prof. S. Timoshenko. 2 parts, 617  
 Mathematical: Analysis, Numerical, Prof. J. B. Scarborough, 962; Ancestry, Our, Prof. H. W. Turnbull, 739  
 Mathematics: Actuarial, An Elementary Treatise on, H. Freeman, 286; Elementary, Craftsmanship in the Teaching of, F. W. Westaway, 950; for Actuaries and Others, Dr. J. Wishart, 286; The Foundations of, and other Logical Essays, F. P. Ramsey. Edited by R. B. Braithwaite, 620; The Teaching of, 950  
 Mathématique, Leçons sur la théorie, de la lutte pour la vie, Prof. V. Volterra. Rédigées par M. Brelot, 963  
 Mathematischen Physik und Technik, Angenäherte und symbolische Lösung der Differentialgleichungen der, Prof. N. M. Kryloff, 963  
 Matriarchy in the Malay Peninsula and Neighbouring Countries, G. A. de C. de Moubray, 624  
 Matter: and Radiation, Prof. F. G. Donnan, 290; Life: Mind: A. Eagle; W. W. L., 906; Dr. W. D. Light-hall, 907; Dr. M. Copisarow, 1042; The Annihilation of, Sir James Jeans, 100, 103; The Properties of, W. H. Spikes, 396



- Maxillo Facial Correlations, A. L. Perier, 734  
 Maxwell: James Clerk, Centenary of the birth of, 487, 604; a Commemorative Volume, 1831-1931. Essays by Sir J. J. Thomson and others, 607; and Modern Theoretical Physics, Prof. Niels Bohr, 691  
 Measurement: Standards of, their History and Development (Guthrie Lecture), Sir Richard Glazebrook, 17  
 Mécanique, Exercices de, H. Beghin and Prof. G. Julia. Tome 1, Fasc. 2, 514  
 Mechanics, Intermediate, D. Humphrey. Vol. 2: Statics and Hydrostatics, 244  
 Medical: Pioneers in Science, Dr. D. F. Fraser-Harris, 864; Research Council: appointment of a Therapeutic Trials Committee, 217; Lord Dawson of Penn and Prof. E. Mellanby appointed members of the, 184; Tables of the Registrar-General's Statistical Review, 1930, 936  
 Medicinal Ions, The Elective Fixation of, by the Electro-Magnet, D. la Tour du Pin, 199  
 Medicine: Curative, Science and (Stephen Paget Memorial Lecture), Dr. H. H. Dale, 499; History of, 939; in Massachusetts, A Brief History of, Dr. H. R. Viets, 135  
 Mediums, Some Modern, T. Besterman, 92  
 Medizin des Rinascimento, aus der, An der Hand des "Leben von Benvenuto Cellini," nach der Übersetzung Goethes, Prof. P. Strassmann, 173  
*Megascolides australis*, the Largest Known Earthworm, C. Barrett, 669  
 Melanism in Moths, Inheritance of, A. W. McKenny Hughes, 496  
 Mellon Institute, The, 418  
 Membrane Behaviour, Studies in, (1), W. L. Francis, 1049  
 Mendelian Factor for Flower Colour, Chemical Effect of a, Hon. Mrs. M. W. Onslow, 373  
 Mental: Defective: The, a Problem in Social Inefficiency, Dr. R. J. A. Berry and Dr. R. G. Gordon, 954; Deficiency, Sterilisation and, 129; Diseases, Joint Board of Research for, Birmingham, Report of the Laboratory of the, 407; Nursing (Simplified), Dr. O. P. N. Pearn, 892  
 Mercury: Band Spectrum in Fluorescence, Lord Rayleigh, 724; Cadmium, and Zinc, The Forbidden Lines in the High Frequency Discharge of, J. Okubo and E. Matuyama, 224; Derivatives of Divalent Bromophenols, M. Amadori, 647; in Vegetable Tissues, A Method for detecting, L. Petri, 647; Large Drop of, Measurements of the Height of a, R. S. Burdon, 456  
 Mercury: Motion of the Perihelion of, Dr. J. K. Fotheringham, 841; Photographs of, Mme. G. Camille Flammarion, 82; Transit of, Gassendi and the, 787  
 Metacresol, The Direct Bromination of, G. Darzens and A. Lévy, 555  
 Metallurgical Spectrum Analysis, A. A. Fitch, 802  
 Metals: Dissolved, Estimation of, F. Twyman and C. S. Hitchen, 587; Electrical Conductivity and Optical Absorption in, E. H. Hall, 555; Impurities in, their Influence on Structure and Properties, Dr. C. J. Smithells. Second edition, 627; Institute of, Journal of the. Vol. 44, 514; Microscopic Examination of, by Polarised Light, Dr. M. v. Schwarz, 800; of the Hydrogen Sulphide Group, Separation of the Earth Acids from, E. F. Waterhouse and W. R. Schoeller, 845; Overstrain of, and its Application to the Auto-Frettage Process of Cylinder and Gun Construction, Major A. E. Macrae, 49; The Spectra of, obtained by Explosive Reactions, T. Tucholski, 126  
 Meteor, A Daylight, 461  
 Meteoric: Hypothesis for the Origin of the Solar System, Abbé Moreux, 729; Stone from Suwahib, Arabia, A New, W. Campbell Smith, 977  
 Meteorite Craters: at Henbury, Central Australia, The, A. R. Alderman, 977; in Central Australia, Contents of, 994  
 Meteorological: Developments important to Agricultural Research, E. G. Bilham, 667; Instruments, Negretti and Zambra's, 670; Office, Annual Report of the Director of the, 753  
 Meteorology, A Century of, Sir Napier Shaw, 925  
 Meteors, The Leonid, 841, 912, 972, 1007  
 Methane and Ethane, The Slow Combustion of, Prof. W. A. Bone, 188; Dr. E. Mardles, 304  
 Methyl: Alcohol, Heat of Combustion of, F. D. Rossini, 555; -Guanido-Oxalic Acid (Creaton) as a Constituent Part of Muscles, V. Gulevitch, 127  
 Methylene Blue: in Gelatin, Diffusion and Cataphoresis of, Mlle. Suzanne Veil, 1013; Stain for Yeast Cells, Fink and Weinfurter, 306  
 Mexican: Hairless Swine, E. Roberts and W. E. Carroll, 866; Jacana, Incubation of the, A. H. Miller, 306  
 Mexico, Ancient, Pottery of, E. Noguera, 459  
 Micelle, Determination of the Charge of the, Mlle. Sabine Filitti, 386  
 Michelson-Morley Experiment, Repetition of the, Prof. G. Joos, 729  
 Microcalorimeter: Adiabatic, Application of the, to the Determination of the Heat of Adsorption and of Vaporisation, W. Swietlawski and Mlle. E. Bartoszewiczowna, 126; An Adiabatic, adapted to the Measurement of the Specific Heat of Solid and Liquid Substances, W. Swietlawski, Mme. M. Rybicka, and Mme. W. Solodkowska, 126  
 Micro-organisms: Formation of New Stable Races of, under the Influence of X-Rays, G. A. Nadson and G. Filippov (2), 422; (3), 467  
 Microscopy: A New Illumination Device for, E. Leitz, 1010; Some Recent Developments in, Prof. L. C. Martin, 833  
*Mikrokosmos*, October, 756  
 Milk Diet for Rats, 306  
 Milky Way, Beyond the, Sir James Jeans, 592, 821, 825  
 Mind, On the Nature of, Dr. C. S. Myers, 744  
 Mineral: Frequencies, Heavy, Accuracy in Percentage Representation of, A. L. Dryden, Jr., 422; Industry, Problems of the, Dr. E. F. Armstrong, 508; Names, New, Dr. L. J. Spencer, 42  
 Mineralogical Society, election of Officers, 834  
 Minerals in Modern Industry, Dr. W. H. Voskuil, 508  
 Mira Ceti, The Theory of the Variability of the Family of, G. Armellini, 646  
 Mitogenetic Radiation acting on the Multiplication of Bacteria, The Hypothesis of, Mlle. Choucrroun, 316  
 Moissan, Henri, A Monument to, 679  
 Molecular: Spectrum and the Structure of the Molecule: Simple Relations between the, Dr. H. Deslandres, 199, 315; Weight Determinations, Le Fèvre and Webb, 38  
 Molecules: Atoms and, as Fitzgerald Oscillators, Sir C. V. Raman, 795; Constitution et thermochimie des, A. et M. Gosselin, 92; Organic, and Surfaces, Collision between, F. O. Rice and H. T. Byck, 228  
 Molybdenum Trioxide, Crystal Structure of: a Correction, Nora Wooster, 35  
 Molybdo-octocyanides, G. A. Barbieri, 647  
 Mongolian Wild Horses at the Zoological Society's Gardens, 792  
*Moniezia expansa*, Life-Cycle of, D. F. Sinitin, 676  
 Monohydric Phenols, Application of the Simonis Reaction to, A. Robertson, 908  
 Monsters: The Mystery and Lore of, with Accounts of Some Giants, Dwarfs, and Prodigies, C. J. S. Thompson, 90  
 Moon: Eclipsed, The Spectrum of the, J. Dufay, 978; Total Eclipse of the: on April 2, 1931, Observation of the, M. Dehalu, 846; on Sept. 26, 550; Observation of the, of Sept. 26, 1931, made in Haute-Provence, E. Esclangon, 806  
 Moose-Wapiti Hybrid in Montana, An Alleged, 676  
 Mordellidæ, New (Coleoptera) in the Collections of the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences, T. Ščegoleva-Barovskaja, 387  
 Moroccan Anti-Atlas, Presence of the Ordovician in the, A. Bigot and J. Dubois, 555  
 Moths, Melanism in, Inheritance of, A. W. McKenny Hughes, 496  
 Mouse, The Laboratory: its Origin, Heredity, and Culture, Dr. C. E. Keeler, 431  
 Mousterial (Levalloisian) Implements, Derived Early, in the Melt-water Gravels of the Coombe Rock Glaciation, J. P. T. Burchell, 909  
 Multiple Ionisation and Secondary X-Ray Absorption Edges, A. Sandström, 759  
 Muscovy Ducks at the Dairy Show, 791



- Museums: Association, Annual Conference of the, 159; in Great Britain, Progress of, Sir Henry Miers, 330
- Musical Sounds, Propagation of, Velocity of, R. de la Boulaye and G. Balme, 646
- Mycobacterium celiacum* Gray and Thornton, The Systematic Position of, H. L. Jensen, 280
- Mycorrhiza in Relation to Forestry, Dr. M. C. Rayner, 1011
- Mysore Tribes and Castes, The, late H. V. Nanjundayya and Rao Bahadur L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer. Vol. 3, 50
- Naga Hills, Human Skulls and Bones from the, Dr. B. S. Guha and P. C. Basu, 762
- Nagata's Comet, 1931 b, 229, 274, 912
- Nansen's Last Journey, 319
- Naphthalene Bisulphite Compounds, Researches on the, P. Lantz and G. Mingasson, 315
- National: Expenditure, Committee on, Recommendations of the, 215; Ministries of Education, 732; Needs, 809; L. A. Fenn, 909; Needs (II.), 1053; Physical Laboratory: appeal for support of the Froude Laboratory and National Experimental Tank at the, 824; Inspection by the General Board, 74; Opening of new physics building, 14; new physics building at the, Dr. G. W. C. Kaye, 311; Radio Exhibition, The, 553
- Nationalism and Science in China, 469, 1035
- Native Administration: Anthropology and, 86; in Africa, 685
- Natural Scenery, The Poetic Impression of, Dr. Vaughan Cornish, 656
- Nature, One Touch of, a Literary Nature Study Reader for Boys and Girls, arranged by Dr. F. W. Tickner, 624
- Nautilus*, Progress of the, Sir Hubert Wilkins, 439
- Naval Architects, Institution of: award of Scholarships, 161; award of the Elgar Scholarship to H. Lackenby and of the Earl of Durham prize to J. A. Price, 420; awards of the, to L. Redshaw and J. Irwin, 768
- Neanthropic Man, Relation of, to the Ice Age, J. P. T. Burchell, 879
- Nebulae: Distant, The Velocities of, Hubble and Humason, 1007; Faint, A New Cluster of, Dr. W. Baade, 641
- Necturus*, Reactions of Dermal Melanophores in, to Heat and to Cold, Elsie H. Field, 163
- Negative Images, Preparation of Fine Grain, by Development, A. Lumière and A. Seyewetz, 1086
- Nematode Parasite of a Lucanid Beetle, A, J. R. Christie and B. G. Chitwood, 910
- Nemertean, A New and Peculiar Marine, from the Australian Coast, Prof. W. J. Dakin and Mahalah G. C. Fordham, 796
- Neon-Helium Bands, Dr. M. J. Druyvesteyn, 1076
- Neujmin's Comet, 1913 III., Detection of, 587
- New: Guinea, Expedition to, Dr. Margaret Mead, 823; South Wales, Mineralogy and Origin of the Natural Beach Sand Concentrate of, H. F. W. Whitworth, 316; Zealand, Science and Agriculture in, 981
- Newcomen Society, Report for 1930-31, 932
- ng* and *np* Ultra-Violet Spectra Refracted by a Doubly Refracting Prism, The Separation of the, A. Brun, 1086
- Nickel: -Chromium Alloys, Melting, in Hydrogen, Dr. C. J. Smithells, S. V. Williams, and E. J. Grimwood, 595; -Copper Alloys of High Elastic Limit, D. G. Jones, L. B. Pfeil, and W. T. Griffiths, 502; Ion in Solutions of its Chloride, The various Magnetic States of the, G. Foëx and Mlle. B. Kessler, 315
- Nicotine, Excretion of, from the Aerial Parts of the Tobacco Plant, J. Chaze, 82
- Nigeria, Anthropology in, P. Amaury Talbot, 285
- Nitrate Deposits of California, L. F. Noble, 155
- Nitrates: Mechanism of the Reduction of, M. P. Korsakova (3), 387; of Lime, Commercial, C. Matignon, 646
- Nitrobenzene: and of Benzene, Melting Points of, Prof. I. Masson, 726; Change of Dielectric Polarisation of, with Temperature, Prof. M. Wolfke and Dr. J. Mazur, 584
- Nitrogen: Compounds contained in Primary Tar, Hydrogenation of the, G. Roberti, 735; in Gases, The Direct Determination of, H. R. Ambler, 845; Pentoxide, The Thermal Decomposition of, J. H. Hodges and E. F. Linhorst, 83
- Nitrogenous Excretion in Invertebrates, Prof. H. De-launay, 306
- Nitrosodithiocarbamates, L. Cambi and A. Cagnasso, 595
- Nitrosyl Chloride, The Hydrolysis of, and of Nitrogen Peroxide by Caustic Potash, A. Perret and R. Perrot, 1086
- Nobel Prize: for Chemistry, 1931, award of the, to Dr. C. Bosch and Dr. F. Bergius, 863; for Medicine for 1931, award of the, to Prof. O. Warburg, 789
- Noise and its Measurement, Dr. G. W. C. Kaye, 251, 253
- Non-ferrous: Metals and Alloys, Application of the Spectrograph to the Analysis of, H. W. Brownson and E. H. S. van Someren, 554, 802; Wires, The Drawing of, E. L. Francis and Prof. F. C. Thompson, 554
- Nordsudetische Dyas: Die, eine stratigraphisch-paläographische Untersuchung, Prof. H. Scupin, 892
- North: -East Coast: Institution of Engineers and Ship-builders, Annual Report of the, 1070; institution of a Laing Memorial Lectureship, 670; Sea Earthquake, The, Rev. J. P. Rowland, 147; Floor, Deep Trench on the, Prof. J. W. Gregory, 37, 792; -West Australia, Rock-Paintings in, A. P. Elkin, 419; -West India, Eocene Mollusca of, L. R. Cox, 460
- Northern Polytechnic, Dr. T. J. Drakeley appointed Principal of the, 124
- Nottingham University College, Dr. H. L. Brose appointed Professor of Physics, 81
- Nova Pictoris, The Distance of, Dr. Spencer Jones, 121
- Novius Organum: Essays in a New Metaphysic, J. C. McKerrow, 562
- Nuclear Moments, Prof. R. de L. Kronig and S. Frisch, 228
- Nucleus, Quantum-Mechanical Models of a, R. H. Fowler, 453
- Nudibranch, A Supposed Primitive Gill-less, Kikutaro Baba, 728
- Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore, R. Huffman, 989
- Nursery, Health and Education in the, Victoria E. M. Bennett and Dr. Susan Isaacs, 690
- Nutrition: and Food Chemistry, B. S. Bronson, 856; *Journal of*, 306; Studies of, The Physique and Health of Two African Tribes, J. B. Orr and J. L. Gilks, 327
- Occluded Gases, Influence of, on the Mechanical Properties of Metallurgical Products, L. Guillet, A. Roux, and J. Cournot, 978
- Oceanic Bird Wanderers to Ceylon, W. E. Wait, 728
- Oenothera*, Chromosome Linkage in a Triploid, D. G. Catcheside, 460
- Oenothera*, Origin of Chromosome Linkage in, Prof. R. R. Gates and D. G. Catcheside, 637
- Oeuvres scientifiques, J. Janssen. Recueillis et publiés par H. Dehérain. Tomes 1 et 2, 239
- "Of Composts shall the Muse disdain to Sing?" Prof. F. L. Engledow, 854
- Official Statistics of the United Kingdom, Guide to Current, 266
- Ogilvie, Sir Francis, The late, J. C. Smail, 118
- Oil: and Petrol from Coal, Dr. C. H. Lander, 900; -Well Drilling, Deep, 93
- Oils, Essential, Researches on, Prof. J. Read, 864
- Oldoway: Bone Beds, Tanganyika Territory: Age of the, Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, A. T. Hopwood, and Prof. H. Reck, 724; New Yields from the, Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, A. T. Hopwood, and Prof. H. Reck, 1075; Further Discoveries in the, 995; Human Skeleton, The, J. Reid Moir, 797
- Ondes et des corpuscles, La Synthèse des, K. K. Darrow, 629
- Optical: Glass Manufacture, Recent Developments in, W. M. Hampton and W. N. Wheat, 926; Rotation and Atomic Dimension, D. H. Brauns, 876; Sensitisation, W. D. Bancroft, J. W. Ackerman, and Catharine Gallagher, 846



- Orange and Allied Fruits, The Culture of the, Prof. H. C. Powell, 955
- Oranges and Arsenates, P. v. d. R. Copeman, 120
- Orchids of the South Maitland Coalfields, with description of a New *Dendrobium* from Bullahdelah, H. M. R. Rupp, 279
- Ordnance Survey : Report for Year ending March 31, 1931, 867 ; The Small-Scale Maps of the, Brig. H. S. L. Winterbotham, 997
- Ore-Minerals and the Microscope, 889
- Organic : Acids in Plants, Nelson and Mottern, 415 ; and Mineral Compounds, Reactions between, R. de Fazi and A. Hemmeler, 43 ; Compounds, Downgrade Reactions of, Measurement of the Electricity Liberated during the, J. H. Wolfenden, 69 ; Gold Compounds, Kharasch and Isbell, 415 ; Oxides : Dissociable, a Dimethoxyrubrene, C. Dufraisse and R. Buret, 163 ; The Dissociable, C. Dufraisse and M. Badoche, 503 ; Syntheses, Vol. 11, 856
- Oriator, The, Cooke, Troughton and Simms, Ltd., 102
- Oriole, American, Song of an, A. H. Miller, 970
- Orpheus : a History of Religions, S. Reinach. Revised and partly rewritten. Translated by Florence Simmonds, 628
- Ørsted, Faraday and, Mrs. Kirstine Meyer, 337
- Orthoptera Celebica Sarasiniana I., 671
- Oscillators with very Short Waves, C. Gutton and G. Beauvais, 1013
- Ostrich, A Fossil, from Transbaicalia, A. Tugarinov, 127
- Ostwald-Luther Hand- und Hilfsbuch zur Ausführung physiko-chemischer Messungen. Fünfte Auflage, 814
- Overhead Transmission Cables, Insulation of, H. O. Austin, 416
- Oxford University : the Savilian Chair of Astronomy, Dr. H. Duden, 681 ; Dr. H. H. E. Craster elected Bodley's Librarian, 768 ; Prof. H. H. Plaskett appointed Savilian Professor of Astronomy, 930 ; gifts from Prof. J. M. Baldwin and the Royal Astronomical Society, 975
- Oxidation : by Living Cells, Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, 175 ; -Reduction Potentials in Bacteriology, L. F. Hewitt, 73
- Oxlip, Wild, Segregation of Floral Characters in the, Prof. F. E. Weiss, 305
- Oxygen : and Everest : Dr. R. Greene, 893 ; N. E. Odell, 1037 ; Consumption, Oscillation in, during the Day and during the whole Life of Invertebrates, K. Michael, 1013 ; Elementary, An Experimental Study on the Estimation of Traces of, F. Novotny and F. Toul, 1013 ; Hydrogen and, Combination of, W. L. Garstang and H. L. Hinshelwood, 1044 ; The Absorption Spectrum of, at High Temperatures, D. Malan, 386
- Oyster, Sex-change in the, Prof. J. H. Orton and C. Amirthalangam, 273
- Ozone : Photosensitised Decomposition of, by Bromine, J. W. T. Spinks, 548 ; Ultra-Violet Spectrum of, O. R. Wulf and E. H. Melvin, 763
- Pacific Science Congress, the fourth, 1033
- Paget, Stephen, Memorial Lecture, Dr. H. H. Dale, 499
- Palæolithic : Flint Implements, J. Reid Moir, 767 ; Man : and the Nile-Faiyum Divide : a Study of the Region during Pliocene and Pleistocene Times, Dr. K. S. Sandford and Dr. W. J. Arkell, 287 ; in Egypt, 287
- Palæontology : Outlines of, Prof. H. H. Swinnerton. Second edition, 173 ; The Evidence of, with regard to Evolution, Prof. A. E. Trueman, 990
- Paläoklimatologie, Dr. F. Kerner-Marilaun, 1025
- Palo Alto Tree, The, Miss A. I. Weymouth, 904
- Pancreatic Juice, Number and Nature of the Proteolytic Ferments of the, Mlle. E. Lebreton and F. Moco-roa, 199
- Pancreatin, Action of, upon different Types of Wool, C. Fromageot and A. Porcherel, 1013
- Paper Making : Dr. E. F. Armstrong, 949 ; The Digestion of Grasses and Bamboo for, W. Raitt, 949
- Paracentrotus lividus*, Action of Sea Water, in which Carotene has remained, on the Experimental Development of, J. A. Thomas, 978
- Paraffin Oil, The Oxidation of, G. Arditti, 882
- 'Paragutta', A. R. Kemp, 218
- Paramagnetic Salts in Aqueous Solutions, The Magnetic Double Refraction of, C. Haenny, 1086
- Parasitology, Human, Introduction to, Prof. A. C. Chandler. Fourth edition, 323
- Paris : Observatory, Report for 1930, 1081 ; University, conferment of Honorary Doctorates on Prof. W. B. Cannon and Prof. H. F. Osborn, 936
- Parsons, Sir Charles, The Life and Work of the late, Sir Alfred Ewing, 932
- Parthénogénèse, La, Prof. A. Vandel, 941
- Parthenogenesis, Problems in, Prof. A. D. Peacock, 941
- Patent : Litigation, The Cost of, W. H. Ballantyne and H. A. Gill, 790 ; System, British, Reform of the, 165
- Paths, Systems of, A Characteristic Property of, C. H. Rowe, 1086
- Peabody Museums of Natural History, 'Special Guides' to the, 113
- Peat Fuel Power Station in Russia, A. F. C. Wigham, 406
- Peking Man and Stone Implements, 823
- Penetrating : Corpuscular Rays coming from Inclined Directions, Measurements on the Absorption of the, Prof. B. Rossi, 408 ; Rays, Origin of, Prof. Gianfranceschi, 581
- Peppermint Oil, Evaluation of the Menthone Content of, Prof. J. Reilly, N. Noonan, and P. J. Drumm, 845
- Pereira Medal of the Pharmaceutical Society, Presentation of the, to H. G. Rolfe, 667
- Peridote, The Apparent Dispersion of the Optical Axes in, and the Measurement of 2V, A. Brun, 1086
- Periodic Physico-Chemical Phenomena, Dr. E. S. Hedges, 398
- Periodicals, The Subject Index to, 1929, 562
- Peroxides in the Gases from Internal Combustion Motors, Dumanois, Mondain-Monval, and Quanquin, 43
- Perseid Meteors observed in America, 550
- Peru : Balsam, The Dry Distillation of, J. Dupont and J. J. Guerlain, 646 ; from the Air, Lieut. G. R. Johnson. With Text and Notes by R. R. Platt, 172
- Petrol-Alcohol-Benzene Mixtures, C. Baron, C. Boulanger, and R. Le Grain, 163
- Petunias, Tetraploid and Triploid, Dr. D. Kostoff and J. Kendall, 227
- Pflanzenmikrochemie : ein Hilfsbuch beim mikrochemischen Studium pflanzlicher Objekte, Dr. A. Tunmann. Zweite Auflage bearbeitet von Prof. L. Rosenthaler, 953
- Pharmacy, School of, of the Pharmaceutical Society, Address to Students of the, Prof. G. E. Gask, 667
- Phenological Observations in the British Isles from Dec. 1929 to Nov. 1930, J. E. Clark, I. D. Margary, R. Marshall, Capt. C. J. P. Cave, and L. C. W. Bonacina, 917
- Philippines, The Tectites of the, A. Lacroix, 554
- Philosophy, A Defence of, Prof. R. B. Perry, 964
- Phosphate of Trivalent Manganese and of Aluminium, A. Yakimach, 315
- Phosphorescence of the Sea, 843
- Phosphoric Acid, The Electrometric Titration of, A. Sanfourche, 82
- Phosphorus, Green Flame of, Band Spectrum of the, Dr. E. B. Ludlam, 271
- Photoconductance in the Photovoltaic Effect, Rôle of the Phenomena of, R. Audubert and J. Roulleau, 555
- Photoelectric : Cells : Gas-filled, Accuracy obtainable with, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins, 550 ; New Facts ascertainable by means of ordinary, Q. Majorana, 734 ; Effect, The, R. H. Fowler, 415 ; Investigations, New, Q. Majorana, 647 ; Relay, A, Dr. L. Bergmann, 677
- Photoelectrons and Negative Ions, Prof. E. M. Wellish, 547 ; Dr. J. L. Hamshere, 871
- Photography, International Congress of, 543
- Photon : Evidence for the Spin of the, from Light-Scattering, Sir C. V. Raman and S. Bhagavantam, 114 ; Dr. G. Placzek, 410 ; The Spin of the, Prof. M. N. Saha and Y. Bhargava, 870
- Photovoltaic Cells, The Rôle of Water in, R. Audubert, 466



- Physical Metallurgy Laboratory Manual, Dr. N. E. Woldman, 779
- Physico-Chemical Phenomena, The Lower Limit of, C. E. Guye, 279
- Physics : A Survey of, Prof. F. A. Saunders, 628 ; Critique of, L. L. Whyte, 964 ; for College Students, A Survey of, Prof. F. A. Saunders, 134 ; General, Prof. W. S. Franklin and Prof. G. E. Grantham, 134 ; in Sound Recording, A. Whitaker, 933 ; Institute of, Dr. H. R. Lang appointed Secretary of the, and Editor of the *Journal of Scientific Instruments*, 1036 ; Intermediate, Dr. R. A. Houston, 134 ; International Union of, Brussels Meeting, 1931, 485 ; Theoretical, Lectures on, delivered at the University of Leiden, Prof. H. A. Lorentz. Translation by Dr. L. Silberstein and A. P. H. Trivelli. Vol. 3 : Maxwell's Theory, Edited by Dr. H. Bremekamp ; The Principle of Relativity for Uniform Translations, Edited by Dr. A. D. Fokker, 959
- Physiology : General, An Elementary Course in, Part 1 : Principles and Theory, Prof. G. W. Scarth. Part 2 : Laboratory Exercises, Prof. F. E. Lloyd and Prof. G. W. Scarth, 563 ; Human Experimental, An Introduction to, Dr. F. W. Lamb, 475
- Physique mathématique, Les méthodes de solution approchée des problèmes de la, Prof. N. Kryloff, 963
- Phytoplankton from South African Pans and Vleis, F. Rich, 316
- Pierce, Lorne, Medal of the Royal Society of Canada, award of the, to Adjutor Rivard, 275
- Piezoelectric Quartz Frequency Meter with Synchronous Modulation, A. B. Decoux, 386
- Pigafetta, New Gyro-stabiliser for the, 934
- Pigeon, Homing, Remarkable Flight of a, 668
- Pigment Migration in the Chromatophores of Crustaceans, Control of, E. B. Perkins and T. Snook, 423
- Pigmy Right Whale (*Neobalæna*), The, H. M. Hale, 910
- Pinnipedia from the Neogene Deposits in Western Siberia, Remains of a Primitive Representative of, J. Orlov, 503
- Pit-Dwellings at Kiatuthlanna, Eastern Arizona, F. H. H. Roberts, Jr., 154
- Pittsburgh, Air Pollution at, H. B. Meller, 307
- Pituitrin : Injected in the Ventricle, The Counteractive Effect of Tribromethanol (Avertin) on the Stimulating Response to, H. Cushing, 422 ; introduced into the Ventricle, Method of Action of, H. Cushing, 422
- Pivots and Jewels, V. Stott, 273
- Planet, New Minor, An interesting, 641
- Planetary System, Birth of the, Theories of the, Prof. W. de Sitter, 972
- Planets, Minor, The numbering of, 800
- Plant : Biochemistry : Prof. A. R. Ling, 621 ; The Principles of, Hon. Mrs. Muriel Wheldale Onslow, Part 1, 621 ; Breeding in Germany, Dr. Baur, 975 ; Contents, Adobe Brick Analysis for, G. W. Hendry, 1006 ; Genetics : Abstracts of Papers on, 65 ; for Herbage Plants, Imperial Bureau of, *Bulletin* of the, 407 ; Life through the Ages : a Geological and Botanical Retrospect, Prof. A. C. Seward, 559 ; Patent, the first, granted by the U.S. Patent Office, 994 ; Physiology : with reference to the Green Plant, Prof. E. C. Miller, 952 ; Processes, Physical Attributes in, 240 ; Virus Diseases : Dr. J. Henderson Smith, 635 ; Insect Relations of, Dr. Kenneth Smith, 915
- Plants : and Geology, 559 ; Exploring for, D. Fairchild, 52 ; Life Movements in, edited by Sir Jagadis Chunder Bose, 240 ; Mortality among, and its bearing on Natural Selection, R. Wetherall, 23 ; The Phosphorus Compounds of, E. Mnich (6), 279
- Platinum, Influence of the Field on the Magnetic States of, Mlle. Paule Collet and G. Foëx, 82
- Pleistocene Period, Duration of the, G. F. Kay, 586
- Pleurodictyum megastomum*, The Development of the Tabulate Coral, R. B. Withers, 127
- Pluto, Orbit and Mass of, Dr. E. C. Bower, 1047
- Poincaré, Henri, *Annales de l'Institut*, Fasc. 2, Vol. 1, 243 ; recueil de conférences et mémoires de calcul des probabilités et physique théorique. Vol. 1, fasc. 3, 657
- Polar : Record, The, July, 581 ; Year 1932-1933, arrangements for the, Dr. G. C. Simpson, 793
- Polarising Microscope, Use of the, in the Determination of Organic Substances, E. Galopin, 734
- Polarity and Vapour Pressure, Dr. A. R. Martin, 456
- Polonium : A New Gaseous Compound of, Mme. Irène Curie and M. Lecoq, 199 ; A New Reaction of, M. Haüssinsky, 315 ; in Tartaric Acid Solution, The Electrochemical and Chemical Behaviour of, M. Haüssinsky, 199 ; The Centrifugation of Solutions of, in the Presence of Various Electrolytes, Mlles. C. Chamie and A. Korveze, 82 ; The Separation of, and of Protactinium fixed on Tantalum Oxide, F. Raymond and Tcheng da tchang, 386
- Polyhedra, Embryology and the Theory of, Prof. D'Arcy W. Thompson, 31
- Population : and Production, Prof. E. Cannan, 534, 658 ; Density and the Optimum for Life, relation between the, and of this to the Sex Ratio, in some Invertebrates, K. Michal, 1013 ; Problems, 10 ; Some Problems of, Sir Leonard Hill, 488 ; Theories of, from Raleigh to Arthur Young : Lectures delivered in the Galtonian Laboratory, University of London, under the Newmarch Foundation, February 11 to March 18, 1929, with two additional Lectures and with References to Authorities, Dr. J. Bonar, 940
- Porcelain, A New, without Silica, based on Pure Fluorspar, R. Damiens, 82
- Porphyro-quartz of Samshildo, The Regular Formation of Twins in, G. Laemmlein, 387
- Position : in High Latitudes, Determination of, with Particular Reference to Aircraft Observation, C. J. Stewart, 212 ; Physiological Perception of, 815
- Positivismus und reale Aussenwelt, Prof. Max Planck, 289
- Posterior : Lobe Extract (Pituitrin), Similarity in the response to, and to Pilocarpine when injected into the Cerebral Ventricles, H. Cushing, 280 ; Pituitary Extract (Pituitrin), Reaction to, when introduced into the Cerebral Ventricles, H. Cushing, 280
- Potassium :  $\beta$ -Radiation of, A Hard Component of the, D. Bocciaelli, 374 ; Permanganate, Influence of Fluoride Ions upon the Reduction of, W. Pugh, 682 ; Salts, The Physiological Characteristics of, D. Prianishnikov and V. V. Butkevitch, 163
- Potato : Plants affected with Certain Virus Diseases, Cytological Studies of, Phyllis Clinch, 198 ; Productivity of the, Influence of a Period in the Mountains on the, J. Costantin, P. Lebard, and J. Magrou, 1086
- Potatoes, Healthy and Leaf Roll, Respiration of, Dr. T. Whitehead, 967
- Potential, The Theory of, R. Wavre (i), 682
- Potentilla, Chrysanthemum* and, Chromosome Multiples in, N. Shimotomai, 72
- Potters' Stamps on Terra Sigillata "Samian Ware", Index of, Dr. F. Oswald. With a Supplement, 951
- Pottery with Flint Implements of Upper Palaeolithic Facies from Swanscombe, Kent, J. P. T. Burchell, 548
- Poultry, Size-Inheritance in, W. T. Waters, 1005
- Power : Sir Alfred Ewing, 567 ; Engineering, Origins of, H. P. Vowles, 800
- Praseodymium and Thallous Sulphates, F. Zambonini and S. Restaino, 1014
- Pre : -Cambrian Tillite in South-West Africa, Dr. T. W. Gevers, 191 ; -Chellean Age in the Gravels of Stanstead, Upper Caterham, apparently Site and New Culture of, L. MacLellan Mann, 144
- Precipitation, Periodic, in the Absence of Colloids, Prof. J. W. McBain, 1042
- Pregl's Method for Determining Nitrogen, Modification of, J. J. Rutgers, 421
- Prehistoric : Colonists of Yorkshire, The, and their Economics, Prof. V. Gordon Childe, 776 ; Society of East Anglia, 879
- Prehistory : An International Congress of, 389 ; Association and Chronology in, A. J. H. Goodwin, 801
- Prejudice : A Plea for, 473 ; in Modern Civilization (Prejudice and Politics), The Place of, Sir Arthur Keith, 473
- Prickly-Pear, Control of, by the Cochineal Insect, C. T. Jacob, 117 ; T. V. Ramakrishna Ayyar, 837 ; W. B. Alexander, 226



- Priestley : and Lavoisier, Sir Philip Hartog, 797 ; as a Pioneer, 464 ; Joseph : A Life of, Anne Holt, 625 ; and his place in the History of Science, Sir Philip Hartog, 464
- Primates, Cerebral Evolution of the, with special reference to the Hominidæ, Prof. C. Fraipont, 61
- Probabilités et statistiques, Dr. R. de Montessus de Ballore, 286
- Probability Theorems connected with the discovery of Variable Stars by a Photographic Method, B. Gerasimovic, 682
- Production, Population and, Prof. E. Cannan, 534, 658
- Prophylaxis, Experiments in, Sir Flinders Petrie, 35
- Protactinium, Purification of the, fixed on Tantalum Oxide, Tcheng Datchang, 466
- Proteins : Hydration of, The Volume Contraction produced by the, C. Marie and N. Marinesco, 978 ; in their Native State, Molecular Weights of the, Prof. The Svedberg, 999
- Proton : On the Mass of the, Sir Arthur Eddington, 1049 ; Waves, The Diffraction of, Y. Sugiura, 1006
- Protons, Collision Properties of, C. Ramsauer, R. Kollath, and D. Lilienthal, 911
- Protoplasm : Extensibility of, Prof. W. Seifriz and Janet Plowe, 1045 ; The Permeability of, to Water, B. Huber, 497
- Protozoölogy, Problems and Methods of Research in, J. Andrews and others. Edited by Prof. R. Hegner and J. Andrews, 395
- Psychology : and Organised Religion, Prof. R. Pearl ; J. R. Miner, 1047 ; Integrative, a Study of Unit Response, Dr. W. M. Marston and C. D. King and Elizabeth H. Marston, 1025
- Psycho : -neurotics, The Concentric Method in the Diagnosis of, Prof. M. Laignel-Lavastine, 690 ; -physical Law, The Fundamental, A. Tsvetkov, 503
- Public Health : Pioneers of, the Story of some Benefactors of the Human Race, M. E. M. Walker, 6
- Puccinia : graminis tritici*, Effect of Light on Urediniospores of Black Stem Rust of Wheat, W. A. R. Dillon Weston, 67 ; *pygmaea* Erikss. on *Berberis*, An *Æcidium* of, W. Tranzschel, 467
- Pueblo and related Indian Races, Skulls of the, Dr. A. Hrdlička, 1079
- Pulp-Wood Market in the United States, The, 313
- Purkinje's Phenomenon, Nature of, P. Rossier, 235
- Pyrethrins in the Pyrethrum Flower, Distribution of the, L. and J. Deshusses, 126
- Pyruvic Acid in Lactic Fermentation, Formation of, S. P. Kostychev, V. Gvaladze, and P. S. Eliasberg, 127
- Qualitative : Analysis by 'Spot' Tests, 987 ; Analyse mit Hilfe von Tüpfelreaktionen : theoretische Grundlagen und praktische Ausführung, Dr. F. Feigl, 987
- Quantitative Analysis, Textbook of, Prof. W. T. Hall, 323
- Quantum : Mechanical Motion of Free Electrons in Electromagnetic Fields, E. H. Kennard, 83 ; Theory, An Introduction to, Dr. G. Temple, 960
- Quartz : Anomalous Variation of the Electrical Conductivity of, with Temperature at the Transformation Point, Prof. H. Saegusa and S. Shimizu, 835 ; Crystallised, and Fused Quartz, Comparison of the Magnetic Rotations of, A. Cotton, 81 ; Resonators and Oscillators, P. Vigoureux, 961
- Quaternary Ice Margins (North Sea), Prof. J. K. Charlesworth, 498
- Quebec, Pre-Cambrian Rocks of, H. C. Cooke, W. F. James, and J. B. Mawdsley, 1006
- Quekett Microscopical Club, Recollections of the, J. M. Offord, 29
- Quinine Sulphate, The Radiation accompanying the Hydration of, M. Curie and M. Prost, 386
- Rabbit : Breeding, The Scientific Aspects of, J. N. Pickard and Prof. F. A. E. Crew, 512 ; Industry, Science in the, 512
- Rabbits, Some Diseases of, 219
- Race and Progress, Prof. F. Boas, 557
- Racemic Aldehydes, Optical Resolution of, (2), M. Betti and P. Pratesi, 1014
- Racial Prejudice, 557
- Radicals, Free Neutral, Fluorescence and, A Connexion between, Dr. W. A. Waters, 905
- Radiation : and Life, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins, 199 ; Matter and, Prof. F. G. Donnan, 290 ; Ultra-Violet, Measurement of, A. F. Dufton and H. E. Beckett, 223
- Radiations from Radioactive Substances, Sir Ernest Rutherford [Lord Rutherford], Dr. J. Chadwick, and Dr. C. D. Ellis, 3
- Radioactive Constants, The, 1006
- Radioactivity : and Earth Movements, Prof. A. Holmes, 419, 496 ; and the Atomic Nucleus, Prof. A. H. Compton, 3 ; of the Atmosphere in Czechoslovakia, 903
- Radio : Beacon Stations of the Rotating Type, 252 ; Broadcasting Stations in Europe, Increase of, 903 ; Communication, Modern, J. H. Reyner, Third edition, 1057 ; -electric Waves, The Propagation of, R. Jouaust and N. Stoyko, 82 ; -elements and Isotopes : Chemical Forces and Optical Properties of Substances, Prof. K. Fajans, 948 ; Frequency Measurements, The Theory and Practice of, E. B. Moullin. Second edition, 1057 ; Observations during a Solar Eclipse, Dr. M. A. F. Barnett, 381 ; Research : Board, Report of the, for the year ended 31st Dec. 1930, 861 ; in Great Britain, 861 ; in the British Empire, R. A. Watson Watt and O. F. Brown, 755 ; Signal across the Atlantic, Thirtieth Anniversary of the First, 1031 ; Signals passing through High Latitudes, Abnormality of, S. Namba, 1044 ; -telegraphy, Second Thoughts on, 1057 ; -telephone System, Demonstration of a, in Italy, 902 ; -therapy, Ultra-Violet, Dr. W. K. Russell, 953
- Radium : Commission, Second Annual Report of the, 803 ; Concentration of, by Plants, V. Vernadskii, 127 ; in Hawaiian Lavas, C. S. Piggot, 840
- Raffety Bands, The, and the Spectra of Comets, F. Baldet, 234
- Railway Electrification : in India, 406 ; in Italy, 146
- Rainfall : as Carbohydrates, Conservation of, Prof. W. A. Osborne, 378 ; in a given place, Usefulness of long Periods of Observation of the, E. Mathias, 918 ; Eighty Years', at North Craig Reservoir, Kilmarnock, W. Dunbar, 917
- Raman : Band in Water, Structure of the, S. Rafalowski ; Dr. G. Bolla, 546 ; Bands in Water, S. Rafalowski, 978 ; Effect : Enlargement of Diffused Lines without change of Frequency in the, Mlle. M. Ney, 126 ; Prof. K. W. F. Kohlrausch, 155 ; in Chemistry, The, R. Lespieau, M. Bourguel, and R. L. Wakeman, 503 ; Lines : due to Co-ordination Bond, Prof. D. M. Bose and S. Datta, 725 ; in Liquids, Fine Structure of, Dr. A. Langseth, 225 ; Scattering : in Gases, Intensity of, S. Bhagavantam, 272 ; Polarisation of, by Hydrogen Gas, S. Bhagavantam, 70 ; Spectra : Effect of Pressure on, S. Bhagavantam, 188 ; in the Ultra-violet, The Monochromatic Stimulation of, Horia Hulubei and Mlle. Yvette Cauchois, 315 ; of Benzene and Toluene, L. E. Howlett, 796 ; of Crystals, Lines of Large Frequency Shift in the, Prof. R. Tomaschek, 495 ; of Liquid Mixtures, P. Krishnamurti, 639 ; Spectrum : and Chemical Constitution of certain Chloroethylenes, G. B. Bonino and L. Brüll, 595 ; of CO<sub>2</sub>, Rotational, W. V. Houston and C. M. Lewis, 280 ; of Dichlorobromomethane, G. B. Bonino and L. Brüll, 1051 ; of Hydrogenated Derivatives of Naphthalene, G. B. Bonino and P. Cella, 1051
- Ramsay : Fellowships, award of, 313 ; Memorial Laboratory of Chemical Engineering at University College : opening of the, by Prince George, 932 ; The, 1046
- Rare : Earths, Sulphates of the, A Physico-chemical Study of the, Prof. B. Brauner and E. Švagr, 1013 ; Gas Spectra, Intensity Anomalies in, E. Rasmussen and H. Swenson, 188
- Rat, The Local Effects in the, due to Electric Fields of very High Frequency, J. Saidman, J. Meyer, and R. Cahen, 387
- Rationalisation, The International Discussion Conference and, 405
- Rationalization, Dr. J. A. Bowie, 92
- Rats and Mice as Enemies of Mankind, M. A. C. Hinton. Third edition, 1036
- Rayons de courbure des surfaces sphériques employées en optique, La mesure des, A. Arnulf, 323



- Red Algæ, Resistance Experiments on, A. Zeller, 467  
 Reflector, Another large, in America, 381  
 Registrar-General's Statistical Review, 1930; Tables, Part 2, Civil, 997  
 Relativistic Opacity Coefficient, The, R. C. Majumdar and D. S. Kothari, 908  
 Religion, Organised, Psychology and, Prof. R. Pearl; J. R. Miner, 1047  
 Repton School Science Society, Conversazione of the, 15  
 Research in Industry and Rationalisation, A. Y. Enström, 122  
 Resonator, Bottle-Pipe, The, A. E. Bate, 270  
 Reticulo-endothelial Blocking, Variations of the Blood Serum Albumins under the Influence of, A. H. Du Bois, 279  
 Reversible Coagulation in Living Tissue, W. D. Bancroft and G. H. Richter, (3), 423; (4), 846; 1014

#### REVIEWS AND SHORT REVIEWS.

##### Agriculture, Forestry, and Horticulture:

- Gill (T.), Tropical Forests of the Caribbean, 1059  
 Howard (A.), and Yeshwant D. Wad, The Waste Products of Agriculture: their Utilization as Humus, 854  
 Keen (Dr. B. A.), The Physical Properties of the Soil, 391  
 Mann (G. E.), [Dr. H. A. Tempany and], Principles of Tropical Agriculture, 954  
 Powell (Prof. H. C.), The Culture of the Orange and Allied Fruits, 955  
 Saunders (A. R.), Maize in South Africa, 1060  
 Tempany (Dr. H. A.), and G. E. Mann, Principles of Tropical Agriculture, 954  
 Wad (Yeshwant D.), [A. Howard and], The Waste Products of Agriculture: their Utilization as Humus, 854

##### Anthropology and Archæology:

- Askell (Dr. W. J.), [Dr. K. S. Sandford and], Paleolithic Man and the Nile-Faiyum Divide; a Study of the Region during Pliocene and Pleistocene Times, 287  
 Bowman (W. D.), The Story of Surnames, 743  
 Broom (Dr. R.), The Origin of the Human Skeleton: an Introduction to Human Osteology, 4  
 Budge (Sir E. A. Wallis), Amulets and Superstitions, 204  
 Cardinall (A. W.), Tales Told in Togoland, to which is added the Mythical and Traditional History of Dagomba, 1026  
 Charlot (J.), [E. H. Morris, Ann Axtell Morris, and], The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza, Yucatan. 2 Vols., 694  
 Elgæ (E.), Early Man in North-east Yorkshire, 776  
 Ewen (C. L'Estrange), A History of Surnames of the British Isles: a Concise Account of their Origin, Evolution, Etymology, and Legal Status, 891  
 Garstang (Prof. J.), Joshua: Judges, 938  
 Goodland (R.), A Bibliography of Sex Rites and Customs: an Annotated Record of Books, Articles, and Illustrations in all Languages, 892  
 Griaule (M.), Le livre de recettes d'un dabtara abyssin, 204  
 Hall (Dr. H. R.), A Season's Work at Ur: al-'Ubaid, Abu Shahrain (Eridu), and Elsewhere; being an Unofficial Account of the British Museum Archæological Mission to Babylonia, 1919, 131  
 Hooton (Dr. E. A.), and others, The Indians of Pecos Pueblo: a Study of their Skeletal Remains, 740  
 Huffman (Ray), Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore, 989  
 Indians: We, the Passing of a Great Race. Being the Recollections of the last of the Great Indian Chiefs, Big Chief White Horse Eagle, as told to Edgar von Schmidt-Pauli. Translated by C. Turner, 891  
 Iyer (Rao Bahadur L. K. Ananthakrishna), [the late H. V. Nanjundayya and], The Mysore Tribes and Castes. Vol. 3, 50  
 Keith (Sir Arthur), Ethnos: or the Problem of Race considered from a New Point of View, 624  
 Leakey (Dr. L. S. B.), with Appendices by J. D. Solomon, C. E. P. Brooks, A. T. Hopwood, H. C. Reck, and M. Connolly, The Stone Age Cultures of Kenya Colony, 1019

- Levy (R.), An Introduction to the Sociology of Islam. Vol. 1, 951  
 McInerny (A. J.), Deserts and the Birth of Civilizations, 475  
 Meek (C. K.), A Sudanese Kingdom: an Ethnographical Study of the Jukun-speaking Peoples of Nigeria, 285; Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria. Vol. 1, 285  
 Morris (Ann Axtell), [E. H. Morris, J. Charlot, and], The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza, Yucatan. 2 Vols., 694  
 Morris (E. H.), J. Charlot, and Ann Axtell Morris, The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza, Yucatan. 2 Vols., 694  
 de Moubray (G. A.), Matriarchy in the Malay Peninsula and Neighbouring Countries, 624  
 Nanjundayya (the late H. V.), and Rao Bahadur L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, The Mysore Tribes and Castes. Vol. 3, 50  
 Oswald (Dr. F.), Index of Potters' Stamps on Terra Sigillata "Samian Ware", 951  
 Prejudice in Modern Civilization, The Place of (Prejudice and Politics), Sir Arthur Keith, 473  
 de Saint-Périer (Dr. R.), La Grotte d'Isturitz. 1: Le Magdalénien de la Salle de Saint-Martin, 988  
 Saller (Dr. K.), Leitfaden der Anthropologie, 624  
 Sandford (Dr. K. S.), and Dr. W. J. Arkell, Paleolithic Man and the Nile-Faiyum Divide; a Study of the Region during Pliocene and Pleistocene Times, 287  
 Smith (Prof. G. Elliot), and others, Early Man: his Origin, Development and Culture, 951  
 Stayt (Dr. H. A.), The Bavenda, 614  
 Thompson (C. J. S.), The Mystery and Lore of Monsters: with Accounts of some Giants, Dwarfs, and Prodigies, 90

##### Biology:

- Allee (Prof. W. C.), Animal Aggregations: a Study in General Sociology, 940  
 Alston (A. H. G.), Supplement 6 to Trimen's 'A Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon,' 891  
 Andrews (J.), and others, edited by Prof. R. Hegner and J. Andrews, Problems and Methods of Research in Protozoölogy, 395  
 Bergey (D. H.), and others, Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology: a Key for the Identification of Organisms of the Class Schizomycetes. Third edition, 6  
 Biden (C. L.), Sea-Angling Fishes of the Cape (South Africa), 209  
 Biologischen Arbeitsmethoden, Handbuch der, Herausgegeben von Prof. E. Abderhalden. Lief. 331. Abt. 9: Methoden der Erforschung der Leistungen des tierischen Organismus, Teil 4, Heft 4 (Schluss). Methoden und Technik der vergleichenden Stoffwechselfysiologie bei Wirbellosen, von H. P. Wolvekamp, 396. Lief. 346. Abt. 9: Methoden der Erforschung der Leistungen des tierischen Organismus, Teil 7, Heft 1. Methoden der Tierhaltung und Tierzucht, 431  
 Botanical Congress, Fifth International, Cambridge, 16-23 August, 1930. Report of Proceedings. Edited by F. T. Brooks and Dr. T. F. Chipp, 778  
 Buchner (Dr. P.), Tier und Pflanze in Symbiose, 558  
 Buller (Prof. A. H. R.), Researches on Fungi. Vol. 4, 944  
 Crawshaw (R.), The Spore Ornamentation of the Rus-sulas, 801  
 Crew (Prof. F. A. E.), [J. N. Pickard and], The Scientific Aspects of Rabbit Breeding, 512  
 Dalziel (Dr. J. M.), [J. Hutcheson and], Flora of West Tropical Africa: the British West African Colonies, British Cameroons, the French and Portuguese Colonies south of the Tropic of Cancer to Lake Chad, and Fernando Po. Vol. 2, Part 1, 952  
 Elliott (Charlotte), Manual of Bacterial Plant Pathogens, 953  
 Elton (C.), Animal Ecology and Evolution, 243  
 Entomological Society of London, Transactions of the. Vol. 79, Part 1, 689  
 Essig (Prof. E. O.), A History of Entomology, 655  
 Fairchild (D.), Exploring for Plants 52



- Gardiner (Prof. J. Stanley), *Coral Reefs and Atolls*: being a Course of Lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute at Boston, February 1930, 206
- Geddes (Prof. P.), [Sir J. Arthur Thomson and], *Life: Outlines of General Biology*. 2 Vols., 1056
- Gideon (P. W.), *An Introduction to Zoology*, 952
- d'Herelle (Prof. F.), translated by Prof. G. H. Smith, *The Bacteriophage and its Clinical Applications*, 431
- Hogben (Prof. L.), *Principles of Animal Biology*, 242
- Hutchinson (J.), and Dr. J. M. Dalziel, *Flora of West Tropical Africa: the British West African Colonies, British Cameroons, the French and Portuguese Colonies south of the Tropic of Cancer to Lake Chad, and Fernando Po*. Vol. 2, Part 1, 952
- Keeler (Dr. C. E.), *The Laboratory Mouse: its Origin, Heredity and Culture*, 431
- Levine (Prof. M.), and H. W. Schoenlein, *A Compilation of Culture Media for the Cultivation of Micro-organisms*, 244
- Lundegårdh (Prof. H.), translated and edited by E. Ashby, *Environment and Plant Development*. Being "Klima und Boden in ihrer Wirkung auf das Pflanzenleben", 135
- Marine Biology: Contributions to, Lectures and Symposia given at the Hopkins Marine Station, Dec. 20-21, 1929, at the Midwinter Meeting of the Western Society of Naturalists*, 172
- Miller (Prof. E. C.), *Plant Physiology: with reference to the Green Plant*, 952
- Nature: One Touch of, a Literary Nature Study Reader for Boys and Girls*, arranged by Dr. F. W. Tickner, 624
- Osborn (Prof. H. F.), edited by Florence Milligan, *Fifty-two Years of Research, Observation and Publication, 1877-1920: a Life Adventure in Breadth and Depth*, 625
- Pickard (J. N.), and Prof. F. A. E. Crew, *The Scientific Aspects of Rabbit Breeding*, 512
- Plants, Life Movements in*, edited by Sir Jagadis Chunder Bose, 240
- Rosa (Prof. D.), adapté de l'italien par l'auteur, *L'Ologénèse: nouvelle théorie de l'évolution et de la distribution géographique des êtres vivants*, 429
- Rumbold (G.), *The Origin of Life*. Second impression, 243
- Schoenlein (H. W.), [Prof. M. Levine and], *A Compilation of Culture Media for the Cultivation of Micro-organisms*, 244
- Seward (Prof. A. C.), *Plant Life through the Ages: a Geological and Botanical Retrospect*, 559
- Singer (Dr. C.), *A Short History of Biology: a General Introduction to the Study of Living Things*, 132
- Smith (Dr. Kenneth M.), *A Textbook of Agricultural Entomology*, 943
- Thomson (Sir J. Arthur), and Prof. P. Geddes, *Life: Outlines of General Biology*. 2 Vols., 1056
- Trimen (H.), *A Hand-Book to the Flora of Ceylon*. Part 6: Supplement, A. H. G. Alston, 891
- Tunmann (Dr. A.), *Pflanzenmikrochemie: ein Hilfsbuch beim mikrochemischen Studium pflanzlicher Objekte*. Zweite Auflage, Prof. L. Rosenthaler, 953
- Vandel (Prof. A.), *La parthénogénèse*, 941
- Weygandt (Prof. C.), *The Wissahickon Hills: Memories of Leisure Hours out of doors in an Old Countryside*, 208
- White, Gilbert, *Journals of*, edited by W. Johnson, 952

**Chemistry:**

- Alchemist: *The Travels of an, the Journey of the Taoist Ch'ang-ch'un from China to the Hindukush at the Summons of Chingiz Khan*. Recorded by Li Chih-Ch'ang. Translated with an introduction by A. Waley, 509
- van Arkel (A. E.), and J. H. de Boer; *Deutsche, von den Verfassern autorisierte Ausgabe von L. Klemm und W. Klemm, Chemische Bindung als elektrostatische Erscheinung*, 816
- Badger (Prof. W. L.), and Prof. W. L. McCabe, *Elements of Chemical Engineering*, 622
- Bailey (Dr. G. H.), and H. W. Bausor, *Chemistry for Matriculation*. Third edition, 173

- Barr (Dr. G.), *A Monograph of Viscometry*, 947
- Bausor (H. W.), [Dr. G. H. Bailey and], *Chemistry for Matriculation*. Third edition, 173
- Blanchard (Prof. A. A.), and Prof. J. W. Phelan, *Synthetic Inorganic Chemistry: a Course of Laboratory and Classroom Study for First Year College Students*. Fourth edition, 92
- de Boer (J. H.), [A. E. van Arkel und], *Deutsche, von den Verfassern autorisierte Ausgabe von L. Klemm und W. Klemm, Chemische Bindung als elektrostatische Erscheinung*, 816
- Bronson (B. S.), *Nutrition and Food Chemistry*, 856
- Caven (Dr. R. M.), and Dr. G. D. Lander, *Systematic Inorganic Chemistry from the Standpoint of the Periodic Law*. New edition, 209
- Chemie, anorganischen, Handbuch der, Herausgegeben von Prof. R. Abegg and others*. Band 4, Abt. 3, Teil 2: A Lief., 1, 625
- Chemistry, Analytical, Recent Advances in, Vol. 1: Organic Chemistry*. Editor: Dr. C. Ainsworth Mitchell, 208
- Chemistry, Physical, A Treatise on, a Co-operative Effort by a Group of Physical Chemists*. Edited by Prof. H. S. Taylor. Second edition. In 2 vols., 429
- Chimie, l'Union Internationale de, Dixième Conférence de, Liège, 14-20 septembre 1930. Rapports sur les hydrates de carbone (glucides)*, 656
- Chittenden (Prof. R. A.), *The Development of Physiological Chemistry in the United States*, 90
- Du Mez (Prof. A. G.), [Prof. G. L. Jenkins and], *Quantitative Pharmaceutical Chemistry: containing Theory and Practice of Quantitative Analysis applied to Pharmacy*, 958
- Durrans (Dr. T. H.), *Solvents*, second edition, 958
- Ewald (P. P.), and C. Hermann, *Strukturbericht, 1913-1928*, 511
- Fajans (Prof. K.): *Radioelements and Isotopes: Chemical Forces and Optical Properties of Substances*, 948; and K. Wüst, translated by B. Topley, *A Textbook of Practical Physical Chemistry*, 852
- Feigl (Dr. F.), *Qualitative Analyse mit Hilfe von Tüpfelreaktionen: theoretische Grundlagen und praktische Ausführung*, 987
- Findlay (Prof. A.), *Practical Physical Chemistry*. Fifth edition, 959
- Fuchs (Dr. W.), *Die Chemie der Kohle*, 1024
- Gessner (Dr. H.), *Die Schlämmanalyse*, 1061
- Gmelins *Handbuch der anorganischen Chemie*. Achte Auflage. System-Nummer 59: Eisen. Teil A, Lief. 3; Teil B, Lief. 3, 657; Bearbeitet von R. J. Meyer. System-Nummer 26: Beryllium. System-Nummer 58: Kobalt. Teil B: Die Ammine des Kobalts, 816
- Goard (Dr. A. K.), *Chemical Composition: an Account of the Methods by which Atomic Weights and Molecular Formulæ have been determined*, 958
- Gosselin (A.), et M. Gosselin, *Constitution et thermo-chimie des molécules: les constituants moléculaires, les liaisons intramoléculaires, la valeur énergétique des liaisons*, 92
- Gosselin (M.), [A. Gosselin et], *Constitution et thermo-chimie des molécules: les constituants moléculaires, les liaisons intramoléculaires, la valeur énergétique des liaisons*, 92
- Grant (Dr. J.), *The Measurement of Hydrogen Ion Concentration*, 852
- Hall (Prof. W. T.), *Textbook of Quantitative Analysis*, 323
- Hermann (C.), [P. P. Ewald und], *Strukturbericht, 1913-1928*, 511
- Holmyard (Dr. E. J.), *Makers of Chemistry*, 321
- Holt (Anne), *A Life of Joseph Priestley*, 625
- Huntress (Prof. E. H.), *A Brief Introduction to the use of Beilstein's Handbuch der organischen Chemie*, 136
- Jager (F. M.), *Spatial Arrangements of Atomic Systems and Optical Activity; Methods, Results and Problems of Precise Measurements at High Temperatures; The Constitution and Structure of Ultramarines*, 852
- Jellinek (Prof. K.), *Lehrbuch der physikalischen Chemie*. Fünf Bände. Band 3: *Die Lehre von der Statik chemischer Reaktionen in verdünnten Mischungen (Lösungen)*. Erste und zweite Auflage. Lief. 9, 852;



- Lief. 10 (Band 4): Die Lehre von der Statik chemischer Reaktionen (Schlussteil) und die Lehre von der chemischen Kinetik. Erste und zweite Auflage, 958
- Jenkins (Prof. G. L.), and Prof. A. G. Du Mez, Quantitative Pharmaceutical Chemistry: containing Theory and Practice of Quantitative Analysis applied to Pharmacy, 958
- Kopaczewski (W.), *Traité de biocolloïdologie*. Tome 1: Pratique des colloïdes. Deux. édition. Fasc. 3: Mésures capillaires et électriques, 852
- Kruyt (Prof. H. R.), translated by Prof. H. S. van Klooster. *Colloids: a Textbook*. Second edition, 852
- Lander (Dr. G. D.), [Dr. R. M. Caven and], *Systematic Inorganic Chemistry from the Standpoint of the Periodic Law*. New edition, 209
- Lewis (Prof. H. F.), *Fundamentals of Organic Chemistry*, 957
- von Lippmann (Prof. E. O.), *Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Alchemie*. Band 2: Ein Lese- und Nachschlage-Buch, 774
- Macbeth (Prof. A. K.), *Organic Chemistry for Medical, Intermediate Science and Pharmaceutical Students*. Second edition, 657
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- Martin (Dr. G.), *The Modern Soap and Detergent Industry*. Second edition. 2 vols., 625
- Mellor (Dr. J. W.), *A Comprehensive Treatise on Inorganic and Theoretical Chemistry*. Vol. 11, 957
- Müller (Prof. E.), translated by Dr. H. J. T. Ellingham, *A Laboratory Manual of Electro-chemistry*, 743
- Miall (Dr. S.), *A History of the British Chemical Industry*, 46
- Onslow (Hon. Muriel Wheldale), *The Principles of Plant Biochemistry*, Part 1, 621
- Organic Syntheses: an Annual Publication of Satisfactory Methods for the Preparation of Organic Chemicals*. Vol. 11, 856
- Ostwald-Luther Hand- und Hilfsbuch zur Ausführung physiko-chemischer Messungen, Herausgegeben von C. Drucker. Fünfte Auflage, 814
- Phelan (Prof. J. W.), [Prof. A. A. Blanchard and], *Synthetic Inorganic Chemistry: a Course of Laboratory and Classroom Study for First Year College Students*. Fourth edition, 92
- Prausnitz (Dr. P. H.), und Dr. J. Reitstötter, *Elektrophorese, Elektroosmose, Elektrodialyse in Flüssigkeiten*, 988
- Rakshit (Jitendra Nath), *Association Theory of Solution and Inadequacy of Dissociation Theory*, 852
- Read (Prof. J.), *An Introduction to Organic Chemistry*, 742
- Reitstötter (Dr. J.), [Dr. P. H. Prausnitz und], *Elektrophorese, Elektroosmose, Elektrodialyse in Flüssigkeiten*, 988
- van Rijn (Dr. J. J. L.), *Die Glykoside: Chemische Monographie der Pflanzenglykoside*. Zweite Auflage von Prof. H. Dieterle, 959
- Scheele, Carl Wilhelm, *The Collected Papers of*, translated by Dr. L. Dobbin, 1023
- Sherman (Prof. H. C.), and S. L. Smith, *The Vitamins*, 743
- Smith (S. L.), [Prof. H. C. Sherman and], *The Vitamins*, 743
- Ulich (Prof. H.), *Chemische Thermodynamik: Einführung in die Lehre von den chemischen Affinitäten und Gleichgewichten*, 52
- Wüst (K.), [Prof. K. Fajans and], translated by B. Topley, *A Textbook of Practical Physical Chemistry*, 852
- Engineering:**
- Abbott (W.), *Machine Drawing and Design: a Textbook of Intermediate Standard for Engineering Students*, 962
- Bradbrooke (F. D.), *The Light Aeroplane Manual*, 961
- Brown (F. J.), *The Cable and Wireless Communications of the World*. Second edition, 1057
- Camichel (Prof. C.), *Leçons sur les conduites*, 209
- Dalby (Prof. W. E.), *Power and the Internal Combustion Engine*, 886
- Deimel (Prof. A. F.), *Mechanics of the Gyroscope*, 289
- Fordham (A. A.), *Civil Engineering Design*, 962
- Garratt (Prof. G. A.), *The Mechanical Properties of Wood: including a Discussion of the Factors affecting the Mechanical Properties, Working Stresses for Structural Timber, and Methods of Timber Testing*, 961
- Macrae (Major A. E.), *Overstrain of Metals: and its Application to the Auto-Frettage Process of Cylinder and Gun Construction*, 49
- Moullin (E. B.), *The Theory and Practice of Radio Frequency Measurements*. Second edition, 1057
- Reyner (J. H.), *Modern Radio Communication*. Third edition, 1057
- Ricardo (H. R.), *The High-Speed Internal-Combustion Engine*. New edition, 886
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- Stewart (Major O.), *Cross-Country Flying; Flying as a Career*, 961
- Timoshenko (Prof. S.), *Strength of Materials*. Parts 1 and 2, 617
- Walker (H. C.), *Charts and Data on Marine Boiler Design: a Summary of the Standard Formulæ in Chart Form with Tables and Notes*, 962
- Wiener (Prof. L.), *Articulated Locomotives*, 289
- Geography and Travel:**
- Briquet (A.), *Le littoral du nord de la France et son évolution morphologique, suivi d'un appendice: L'Évolution du rivage du nord de la France et l'activité de l'homme*, 396
- Curnow (Dr. I. J.), *The World Mapped: being a Short History of attempts to Map the World from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, 289
- Geilinger (Dr. W.), *Der Kilimandjaro: sein Land und seine Menschen*, 956
- Huxley (Prof. J.), *Africa View*, 87
- Johnson (Lieut. G. R.), with text and notes by R. R. Platt, *Peru from the Air*, 172
- Nansen (Dr. F.), translated by G. C. Wheeler, *Through the Caucasus and the Volga*, 319
- Siam: *Nature and Industry*, 209
- Thomas (B.), *Alarms and Excursions in Arabia*, 956
- Wilmore (Dr. A.), *The Groundwork of Modern Geography: an Introduction to the Science of Geography*. Third edition, 955
- Geology, Mineralogy, and Mining:**
- Barrett (B. H.), [Prof. J. W. Gregory and], *General Stratigraphy*, 945
- Dannenberg (Prof. A.), *Geologie der Steinkohlenlager*. Band 2, Teil 2, 816
- Davison (E. H.), *Handbook of Cornish Geology*. Second edition, 779
- Gold Resources of the World, *The*, with a Summary by A. C. Sutherland, 4
- Grabau (Prof. A. W.), *Central Asiatic Expeditions. The Permian of Mongolia: a Report on the Permian Fauna of the Jisu Honguer Limestone of Mongolia and its relations to the Permian of other parts of the World. With a Chapter on the Relations of the Jisu Honguer Formation to the General Geology of Mongolia*, by Dr. C. P. Berkey and F. K. Morris, 956
- Gregory (Prof. J. W.), and B. H. Barrett, *General Stratigraphy*, 945
- Longwell (Prof. C. R.), *Outlines of Physical Geology*, 513
- Pratje (O.), *Helgoland und die Zerstörung seiner Felsküste durch das Meer*, 657
- Ramdohr (Prof. P.), [Prof. H. Schneiderhöhn und], *Lehrbuch der Erzmikroskopie*. Band 2; *Erzmikroskopische Bestimmungstafeln: Anhang zum Lehrbuch der Erzmikroskopie*, 889
- Richey (J. E.), and others, *The Geology of Ardnamurchan, North-west Mull and Coll*, 619
- Schaffer (Prof. F. X.), *Lehrbuch der Geologie*. Teil 3: *Geologische Länderkunde (Regionale Geologie)*, Lief. 1, 956



- Schneiderhöhn (Prof. H.), und Prof. P. Ramdohr, Lehrbuch der Erzmikroskopie. Band 2; Erzmikroskopische Bestimmungstafeln: Anhang zum Lehrbuch der Erzmikroskopie, 889
- Schuchert (Prof. C.), Outlines of Historical Geology. Second edition, 513
- Scupin (Prof. H.), Die Nordsudetische Dyas: eine stratigraphisch-paläogeographische Untersuchung, 892
- Stratigraphie Deutschlands. Handbuch der vergleichenden. Herausgegeben von der Preussischen Geologischen Landesanstalt. *Alluvium*. Schriftleitung, J. Stoller. Unter Mitwirkung von K. von Bülow und W. Diemann, 1025
- Swinnerton (Prof. H. H.), Outlines of Palæontology. Second edition, 173
- Voskuil (Dr. W. H.), Minerals in Modern Industry, 508
- Willis (Prof. B.), Living Africa: a Geologist's Wanderings through the Rift Valleys, 87
- Woldstedt (Dr. P.), Das Eiszeitalter: Grundlinien einer Geologie des Diluviums, 394

**Mathematical and Physical Science:**

- Arnulf (A.), La mesure des rayons de courbure des surfaces sphériques employées en optique, 323
- Ashcroft (E. W.), Faraday, 323
- Baker (Prof. R. H.), Astronomy: an Introduction, 563
- Beghin (H.), and Prof. G. Julia, Exercices de mécanique. Tome 1, fasc. 2, 514
- Berkeley (L. M.), Addition-Subtraction Logarithms to Five Decimal Places, 91
- Boznan (A. M.), A School Algebra: as far as the Advanced Course in the School Certificate Stage, 1061
- Chadwick (Dr. J.), [Sir Ernest Rutherford (Lord Rutherford), Dr. C. D. Ellis, and], Radiations from Radioactive Substances, 3
- Craig (J. I.), The Elements of Analytical Geometry. Vol. 1.: Straight Line and Circle, 52
- Culver (Prof. C. A.), Electricity and Magnetism: an Advanced Text-book for Colleges, 629
- Darrow (K. K.), La synthèse des ondes et des corpuscules, 629
- Davidson (Dr. C.), The Japanese Earthquake of 1923, 989
- Delporte (E.), Atlas céleste, 690
- Durell (C. V.), and A. Robson, Advanced Trigonometry, 92
- Earth: Physics of the; Volcanology; The Figure of the Earth; Meteorology; The Age of the Earth, 984
- Eason (A. B.), Flow and Measurement of Air and Gases. Second edition, 654
- Edge (W. L.), The Theory of Ruled Surfaces, 856
- Elektroneninterferenzen, Herausgegeben von Prof. P. Debye, 396
- Ellis (Dr. C. D.), [Sir Ernest Rutherford (Lord Rutherford), Dr. J. Chadwick, and], Radiations from Radioactive Substances, 3
- Erlang (A. K.), Udgivet ved R. E. H. Rasmussen, Femcifrede Logaritmer og Antilogaritmer, 91
- Experimentalphysik, Handbuch der, Herausgegeben von W. Wien und F. Harms. Band 4. Teil 1, 654
- Franklin (Prof. W. S.), and Prof. G. E. Grantham, General Physics, 134
- Freeman (H.), An Elementary Treatise on Acturial Mathematics, 286
- Geophysical Prospecting. The Principles and Practice of, being the Report of the Imperial Geophysical Experimental Survey. Edited by A. B. Broughton Edge and Prof. T. H. Laby, 427
- Gheury de Bray (M. E. J.), Elementary Hyperbolics: for Technical and other Students; specially adapted to the Requirements of Beginners. Vol. 1: Hyperbolic Functions of Real and Unreal Angles. Vol. 2: The Applications of Hyperbolic Functions, 1026
- Gibson (late Prof. G. A.), Advanced Calculus: a Sequel to an Elementary Treatise on the Calculus, 851
- Glasser (Dr. O.), Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen und die Geschichte der Röntgenstrahlen. Mit einem Beitrag: Persönliches über W. C. Röntgen, mit Margret Boveri, 629
- Grantham (Prof. G. E.), [Prof. W. S. Franklin and], General Physics, 134

- Hamilton, Sir William Rowan, The Mathematical Papers of. Vol. 1: Geometrical Optics. Edited by Prof. A. W. Conway and Prof. J. L. Synge, 167
- Heath (Sir Thomas L.), A Manual of Greek Mathematics, 739
- Hotie (Capt. M.), Surveying from Air Photographs, 946
- Houstoun (Dr. R. A.), Intermediate Physics, 134
- Humphrey (D.), Intermediate Mechanics. Vol. 2: Statics and Hydrostatics, 244
- International Astronomical Union (Union Astronomique Internationale). Report of Commission 3: Atlas céleste, E. Delporte, 690
- Janssen (J.), Œuvres scientifiques. Recueillis et publiés par H. Dehérain. Tomes 1 et 2, 239
- Jans (Sir James), The Stars in their Courses, 615
- Julia (Prof. G.), [H. Beghin and], Exercices de mécanique. Tome 1, fasc. 2, 514
- Kayser (Prof. H.), and Prof. H. Konen, Handbuch der Spektroskopie. Band 7, Lief. 2, 1061
- Kohlrusch (Prof. K. W. F.), Der Smekal-Raman-Effekt, 1026
- Konen (Prof. H.), [Prof. H. Kayser und], Handbuch der Spektroskopie. Band 7, Lief. 2, 1061
- Kryloff (Prof. N. M.), Angenäherte und symbolische Lösung der Differentialgleichungen der mathematischen Physik und Technik, 963
- Kryloff (Prof. N.), Les méthodes de solution approchée des problèmes de la physique mathématique, 963
- Leavenworth (Prof. F. P.), Measures of Double Stars, with the Measures by Prof. W. O. Beal, 743
- Lindsay (Prof. R. B.), [Prof. G. W. Stewart, and], Acoustics: a Text on Theory and Applications, 779
- Lorentz (Prof. H. A.), Lectures on Theoretical Physics delivered at the University of Leiden. Authorised translation by Dr. L. Silberstein and A. P. H. Trivelli. Vol. 3: Maxwell's Theory, edited by Dr. H. Bremekamp; The Principle of Relativity for Uniform Translations, edited by Dr. A. D. Fokker, 959
- Mackaye (Prof. J.), The Dynamic Universe, 288
- Matthews (R. B.), Electricity for Everybody: Handbook for 1931, 960
- Maxwell: James Clerk, a Commemorative Volume, 1831-1931. Essays by Sir J. J. Thomson, and others, 607
- Montessus de Ballore (Dr. R. de), Probabilités et statistiques, 286
- Nicod (J.), Foundations of Geometry and Induction. Containing Geometry in the Sensible World, and The Logical Problem of Induction. Translated by P. P. Wiener, 430
- Nightingale (E.), Magnetism and Electricity, 959
- Payne (Cecilia H.), The Stars of High Luminosity, 615
- Pohl (Prof. R. W.), translated by Winifred M. Deans, Physical Principles of Electricity and Magnetism, 134
- Poincaré, Henri, Annales de l'Institut, Fasc. 2, Vol. 1, 243; recueil de conférences et mémoires de calcul des probabilités et physique théorique. Vol. 1, Fasc. 3, 657
- Reidemeister (Prof. K.), Vorlesungen über Grundlagen der Geometrie, 626
- Robson (A.), [C. V. Durell and], Advanced Trigonometry, 92
- Rosseland (Prof. S.), Astrophysik auf atomtheoretischer Grundlage, 615
- Rutherford (Sir Ernest) [Lord Rutherford], Dr. J. Chadwick, and Dr. C. D. Ellis, Radiations from Radioactive Substances, 3
- Saunders (Prof. F. A.), A Survey of Physics for College Students, 134; A Survey of Physics, 628
- Scarborough (Prof. J. B.), Numerical Mathematical Analysis, 962
- Shapley (Dr. H.), Flights from Chaos: a Survey of Material Systems from Atoms to Galaxies, 615
- Shearcroft (W. F. F.), Post-Primary Science. Book 1: First Year's Course, 960
- Shorter (L. R.), Introduction to Vector Analysis: with many fully worked examples and some applications to Dynamics and Physics, 626
- Smart (Prof. W. M.), Text-Book on Spherical Astronomy, 207
- Spikes (W. H.), The Properties of Matter, 396



- Steffensen (Prof. J. F.), Some Recent Researches in the Theory of Statistics and Actuarial Science, 286  
 Stetson (Prof. H. T.), Man and the Stars, 615  
 Stewart (Prof. G. W.) and Prof. R. B. Lindsay, Acoustics: a Text on Theory and Applications, 779  
 Temple (Dr. G.), An Introduction to Quantum Theory, 960  
 Thomas (Prof. O.), translated by B. Miall, The Heavens and the Universe, 244  
 Thomas (Prof. T. Y.), The Elementary Theory of Tensors: with Applications to Geometry and Mechanics, 626  
 Thompson (J. E.), A Manual of the Slide Rule: its History, Principle and Operation. Second printing, 563  
 Thomson (Prof. G. P.), The Wave Mechanics of Free Electrons, 47  
 Toms (Dr. H.), School Certificate Magnetism and Electricity, 431  
 Vigoureux (P.), Quartz Resonators and Oscillators, 961  
 Villat (Prof. H.), Mécanique der fluides, 654  
 Volterra (Prof. V.), Rédigées par M. Brelot. Leçons sur la théorie mathématique de la lutte pour la vie, 963  
 Watts (late Dr. W. Marshall), Index of Spectra. Appendix Z: Iron and Iron Oxide, 1060  
 Westaway (F. W.), Craftmanship in the Teaching of Elementary Mathematics, 950  
 Whitlock (T. G.), Elementary Applied Aerodynamics, 654  
 Whyte (L. L.), Critique of Physics, 964  
 Williams (Prof. S. R.), Magnetic Phenomena: an Elementary Treatise, 623  
 Zinner (Prof. E.), Die Geschichte der Sternkunde: von den ersten Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, 986

### Medical Science and Physiology:

- Arkwright (J. A.), and others, A System of Bacteriology in relation to Medicine. Vol. 6, 888  
 Bennett (Victoria E. M.), and Dr. Susan Isaacs, Health and Education in the Nursery, 690  
 Bligh (E. W.), [S. G. B. Stubbs and], Sixty Centuries of Health and Physick: the Progress of Ideas from Primitive Magic to Modern Medicine, 939  
 Camis (Prof. M.), translated and annotated by Dr. R. S. Creed, The Physiology of the Vestibular Apparatus, 815  
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 Chandler (Prof. A. C.), Introduction to Human Parasitology. Fourth edition, 323  
 Chen (K. K.), and C. F. Schmidt, Ephedrine and related Substances, 629  
 Clendening (Dr. L.), The Human Body. Second edition, 173  
 Crookshank (Dr. F. G.), Epidemiological Essays, 323  
 Hollander (Dr. B.), Brain, Mind and the External Signs of Intelligence, 815  
 Holmes (Dr. Barbara), Cancer and Scientific Research, 136  
 Isaacs (Dr. Susan), [Victoria E. M. Bennett, and], Health and Education in the Nursery, 690  
 Lamb (Dr. F. W.), An Introduction to Human Experimental Physiology, 475  
 Nathan (Dr. M.), L'esprit et ses maladies, 6  
 Pearn (Dr. O. P. N.), Mental Nursing (Simplified), 892  
 Russell (Dr. W. K.), Ultra-Violet Radiotherapy, 953  
 Scarth (Prof. G. W.), An Elementary Course in General Physiology. Part 1: Principles and Theory, Prof. G. W. Scarth. Part 2: Laboratory Exercises, Prof. F. E. Lloyd and Prof. G. W. Scarth, 563  
 Strassmann (Prof. P.), Aus der Medizin des Rinascimento. An der Hand des "Leben von Benvenuto Cellini" nach der Übersetzung Goethes, 173  
 Stubbs (S. G. B.), and E. W. Bligh, Sixty Centuries of Health and Physick: the Progress of Ideas from Primitive Magic to Modern Medicine, 939  
 Troup (W. A.), Therapeutic Uses of Infra-Red Rays, 953  
 Tumours, The Metabolism of, edited by O. Warburg, translated by Dr. F. Dickens, 630

- Viets (Dr. H. R.), A Brief History of Medicine in Massachusetts, 135  
 Walker (M. E. M.), Pioneers of Public Health: the Story of some Benefactors of the Human Race, 6  
 Wilson (Dr. Isabel), How You Work: an Introduction to the Human Body, 136

### Metallurgy:

- Benedicks (Dr. C.), and H. Löfquist, Non-Metallic Inclusions in Iron and Steel, 856  
 Dews (H. C.), The Metallurgy of Bronze, 627  
 Johnson (C. M.), Rapid Methods for the Chemical Analysis of Special Steels, Steel-making Alloys, their Ores, Graphites, and Bearing Metals. Fourth edition, 288  
 Löfquist (H.), [Dr. C. Benedicks and], Non-Metallic Inclusions in Iron and Steel, 856  
 Metals, Institute of, Journal of the, Vol. 44, edited by G. Shaw Scott, 514  
 Rosenholtz (Dr. J. L.), The Elements of Ferrous Metallurgy, 626  
 Smithells (Dr. C. J.), Impurities in Metals: their Influence on Structure and Properties. Second edition, 627  
 Woldman (Dr. N. E.), Physical Metallurgy Laboratory Manual, 779

### Meteorology:

- Kerner-Marilaun (Dr. F.), Paläoklimatologie, 1025  
 Miller (A. A.), Climatology, 514

### Miscellaneous:

- Aristotle, The Works of, translated into English. Physica. By R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, 396  
 Besterman (T.), Some Modern Mediums, 92  
 Bonar (Dr. J.), Theories of Population from Raleigh to Arthur Young: Lectures delivered in the Galtonian Laboratory, University of London, under the Newmarch Foundation, February 11 to March 18, 1929, with two additional Lectures and with References to Authorities, 940  
 Bowie (Dr. J. A.), Rationalization, 92  
 Bright (Sir Charles), Let's Help! a Collection of Good Causes, 939  
 Britton (L.), Hunger and Love, 475  
 Bryk (F.), Die Beschneidung bei Mann und Weib: ihre Geschichte, Psychologie und Ethnologie, 91  
 Carpenter, Edward, in Appreciation, edited by G. Beith, 892  
 Cornish (Dr. Vaughan), The Poetic Impression of Natural Scenery, 656  
 Crowther (J. G.), An Outline of the Universe, 627  
 Dingwall (Dr. E. J.), The Girdle of Chastity: a Medico-Historical Study, 628  
 Earle (F. M.), and other members of the staff of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, edited with a Preface by Dr. Charles S. Myers, Methods of Choosing a Career: a Description of an Experiment in Vocational Guidance conducted on Twelve Hundred London Elementary School Children, 393  
 Fay (C. R.), Youth and Power: the Diversions of an Economist, 955  
 Flexner (Dr. A.), Universities: American, English, German, 811  
 Howarth (O. J. R.), The British Association for the Advancement of Science: a Retrospect, 1831-1931. Centenary (second) edition, 687  
 Jeanne d'Arc, The Trial of. A complete translation of the Text of the Original Documents, with an Introduction, by W. P. Barrett, 284  
 Lodge (Sir Oliver), Advancing Science: being Personal Reminiscences of the British Association in the Nineteenth Century, 982  
 London and the Advancement of Science. Various Authors, 687  
 Loveday (A.), Britain and World Trade: Quo Vadimus and other Economic Essays, 955  
 Modern Knowledge, An Outline of, edited by Dr. W. Rose, 937



- Murphy (P.), Armadas of the Sky : the Problem of Armaments, 963  
 Periodicals, The Subject Index to, 1929, 562  
 Royal College of Science, Scientific Journal of the, Vol. 1, 627  
 Science at the Cross Roads. Papers presented to the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology held in London from June 20 to July 3, 1931, by the Delegates of the U.S.S.R., 170  
 Tannery, Paul, Mémoires scientifiques de, Publiés par L.-L. Heiberg et H.-G. Zeuthen. Tome 10 (Supplément au Tome 6) : Sciences modernes, généralités historiques, 1892-1930. Édité avec la collaboration de Joseph Pérès, 613  
 Tawney (R. H.), Equality, 964  
 Upasaka (E.), A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity, 892  
 Wickens (C. H.), Editor : J. Stonham, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia. No. 23, 1930, 514  
 Wolf (Prof. A.), Textbook of Logic, 6

**Philosophy and Psychology :**

- Badley (J. H.), The Will to Live : an Outline of Evolutionary Psychology, 954  
 Berry (Dr. R. J. A.), and Dr. R. G. Gordon, The Mental Defective : a Problem in Social Inefficiency, 954  
 Carr (Dr. H. Wildon), The Monadology of Leibniz : with an Introduction, Commentary and Supplementary Essays, 136  
 Dibblee (G. B.), Instinct and Intuition : a Study in Mental Duality, 51  
 Gordon (Dr. R. G.), [Dr. R. J. A. Berry and], The Mental Defective : a Problem in Social Inefficiency, 954  
 Isaacs (Dr. Susan), Intellectual Growth in Young Children. With an Appendix on Children's "Why" Questions, by Nathan Isaacs, 777  
 Jørgensen (Prof. J.), A Treatise on Formal Logic : its Evolution and Main Branches, with its Relations to Mathematics and Philosophy. 3 Vols., 1021  
 King (C. D.), [W. M. Marston, Elizabeth H. Marston, and], Integrative Psychology : a Study of Unit Response, 1025  
 Laignel-Lowastine (Prof. M.), The Concentric Method in the Diagnosis of Psychoneurotics, 690  
 Lange (Prof. J.), translated by Charlotte Haldane, Crime as Destiny : a Study of Criminal Twins, 630  
 Lynch (A.), Brain and Mind, 954  
 Mackenzie (Prof. J. S.), Cosmic Problems : an Essay on Speculative Philosophy, 628  
 McKerrow (J. C.), Novius Organum : Essays in a New Metaphysic, 562  
 Marston (Elizabeth H.), [W. M. Marston, C. D. King, and], Integrative Psychology : a Study of Unit Response, 1025  
 Marston (W. M.), C. D. King, and Elizabeth H. Marston, Integrative Psychology : a Study of Unit Response, 1025  
 Pear (Prof. T. H.), Voice and Personality, 657  
 Perry (Prof. R. B.), A Defence of Philosophy, 964  
 Planck (Prof. Max), Positivismus und reale Aussenwelt, 289  
 Ramsey (F. P.), edited by R. B. Braithwaite, The Foundations of Mathematics : and other Logical Essays, 620  
 Reinach (S.), Orpheus : a History of Religions, Revised. Translated by Florence Simmonds, 628  
 Seward (Prof. S. S.), The Paradox of the Ludicrous, 988  
 Smith (Prof. Sydney), Alcohol and Behaviour, 630

**Technology :**

- Capey (R.), The Printing of Textiles, 855  
 Gabillon (R.), Soies artificielles et matières plastiques, 855  
 Hope-Jones (F.), Electric Clocks, 651  
 Kershaw (S.), Worsted Open Drawing, 1060

- Kohle, Entstehung, Veredlung und Verwertung der, Vorträge von W. Petrascheck, H. Apfelbeck, H. Tropsch, R. Heinze, A. Czermak, E. Kothny, H. Löffler, A. Rozinek, J. C. Breinl. Herausgegeben von Prof. K. A. Redlich, Prof. J. C. Breinl und H. Tropsch, 1024  
 Norman (Ivy Evelyn), and P. I. Smith, Leather Crafts Manual, 1060  
 Practical Dry Cleaner, Scourer and Garment Dyer, edited by W. T. Brannt and J. B. Gray. Sixth edition, 1060  
 Raitt (W.), The Digestion of Grasses and Bamboo for Paper-making, 949  
 Smith (P. I.), [Ivy Evelyn Norman and], Leather Crafts Manual, 1060  
 Snyder (H.), with biographical sketch by A. L. Winton, Bread : a Collection of Popular Papers on Wheat, Flour and Bread, 953  
 Williams (J. G.), Textiles on Test : a Study for Distributor and Consumer of the Wearing and Washing Properties of Fabrics and Garments, 855

- Revista del Consejo Oceanografico Ibero-Americano*, 868  
 Rhenium : Compounds, Briscoe, Robinson, and Stoddart, 192, 729 ; Magnetic Resolution of Nuclear Moment of, Prof. P. Zeeman, J. H. Gisolf, and T. L. de Bruin, 637  
 Rhodesia, Southern, Archæology and Surveying in, 500  
 Rhodium Compounds, G. A. Barbieri, 683  
 Rhodopes and the Balkans, The Central, G. Ladame, 83  
 Rice Research in India, Grant towards, by the Empire Marketing Board, 148  
 Rift Valleys, the Origin of, African Settlement and, Prof. J. W. Gregory, 87  
 Ringed Plover and its Eggs, G. Marples, 154  
 "River Flow Records", Reports of, Capt. W. N. McClean, 867  
 Rockefeller : Fellowships, award of, 81 ; Institute for Medical Research, The, 792  
 Rock-Paintings in North-West Australia, A. P. Elkin, 419  
 Rocks, Lead Content of, Prof. G. Hevesy and Dr. A. Hobbie, 1038 ; Prof. A. Holmes, 1039  
 Roman : Buildings in Britain, Discovery of, 252 ; Neanderthal Skull, The, Prof. S. Sergi, 306  
 Röntgen, Wilhelm Conrad, und die Geschichte der Röntgenstrahlen, Dr. O. Glasser. Mit einem Beitrag : Persönliches über W. C. Röntgen, von Margret Boveri, 629  
 Roosevelt Medal, award of the, to Dr. C. Hart Merriam, 147  
 Roses, A Virus Disease of, in Australia, B. J. Grieve, 839  
 Rotatoria from the Ussuri Region, Two New Species of, N. S. Smirnov, 467  
 Rotary Polarisation, The Natural and Magnetic, of some Organic Compounds studied in the Liquid State, C. Salceanu, 82  
 Rotifers influenced by Feeding, Polymorphic Characters in, Kenzo Kikuchi, 227  
 Royal : Anthropological Institute, Foundation of a Gold Medal by, Dr. H. S. Wellcome, 904 ; College of Science, Scientific Journal of the, Vol. 1, 627 ; College of Surgeons of England, Lord Moynihan re-elected president of the, 101 ; Commission on the Civil Service, The, 201 ; Institution : Rumford and the, a Retrospect, T. E. James, 476 ; Meteorological Society, Phenological Report for 1930, 633 ; Microscopical Society, Prof. V. Grégoire and Prof. O. Rosenberg elected Honorary Fellows, 834 ; Photographic Society, Exhibition of the, 543, 822 ; Society : Prof. C. Fabry, Dr. E. de Margerie, and Prof. H. Wieland elected Foreign Members of the, 64 ; Anniversary Meeting of the, presentation of Medals, 973 ; award of Medals, 821 ; recommendations for election as Officers and Council of the, 864 ; award of Royal Medals to Sir Richard Glazebrook and Prof. W. H. Lang, 973 ; award of the Copley Medal to Sir Arthur Schuster, 973 ; award of the Davy Medal to Prof. A. Lapworth, 973 ; award of the Hughes Medal to Prof. W. L. Bragg, 974 ; award of the Sylvester Medal to Prof. E. T. Whittaker, 974 ; of Canada : Annual Meeting in Toronto, 275 ; Sir Robert Falconer elected President of the, 276 ;



- of Edinburgh, election of Officers, 793; for the Protection of Birds, Report of the, 633; Swedish Academy of Science, Sir Sidney Harmer elected a Foreign Member of the, 723
- Rubber: Artificial, E. I. du Pont de Nemours, 1044; Research Institute of Malaya, Report of the, 880
- Rubidium Spectrum, Hyperfine Structure in the, D. A. Jackson, 34
- Ruled Surfaces, The Theory of, W. L. Edge, 856
- Rumford and the Royal Institution: a Retrospect, T. E. James, 476
- Rural Electrification, E. W. Dickinson and H. W. Grimmitt, 902
- Russia: and the U.S.S.R., Faraday and Electrical Science in, W. T. Mitkewich, 359; Industrialisation in, Wigham, 544
- Russulas, The Spore Ornamentation of the, R. Crawshaw, 891
- Rust Diseases of Cereal Crops, Sir R. H. Biffen, 728
- Ruwenzori, Uganda, Petrology of the Volcanic Fields east and south-east of, Prof. A. Holmes and H. F. Harwood, 977
- Sacred Bull, Cult of the, in Ancient Egypt, O. H. Myers, 119
- Safety: in Mines: Research Board, Annual Report, 698; Work in Chemical Industries, 1
- Sahara, Magnetic and Electrical Observations in the, C. Le Camus and F. de Saint-Just, 882
- St. Andrews University: Dr. F. L. Arnot appointed Lecturer in Natural Philosophy, and Dr. G. L. Montgomery Lecturer in Clinical Pathology, 81; Fire Outbreak at, 822; Genl. J. C. Smuts elected Rector, 916
- St. Kilda, Change of owner of, 182
- Sál, Seeds and Seedlings of, H. G. Champion and B. D. Pant, 1080
- Salix*, The Biochemical Study of the genus, C. Charaux and J. Rabaté, 199
- Salt Hydrate, Dissociation of a, Function of Water Vapour in the, B. Topley and M. L. Smith, 302
- Salters' Institute, award of fellowships of the, 313
- Salts: Complex, Absorption Spectra of, Dr. R. Samuel, 729; Dehydration of, Dr. M. Copisarow, 838; of the Iron Group, Gyromagnetic Effect for, W. Sucksmith, 640
- Saluda Hydro-Electric Station near Columbia, Completion of the, 330
- Santonine, The Mechanism of the Antiglycosuric Action of, A. Leulier and Mme. Andrée Roche, 422
- Saturated Hydrocarbons in the Gaseous State, The Thermal Conductivities of, W. B. Mann and B. G. Dickens, 881
- Saturn's Ring, The Mass of, H. Slouka, 972
- Save the Children International Union of Geneva, Section of Preventive Pædiatrics, Congress of the, 544
- Scheele: Carl Wilhelm, The Collected Papers of, Translated by Dr. L. Dobbin, 1023; The Works of, 1023
- Schistosomiasis (Bilharziasis), Zoological, Clinical, and Prophylactic, The Bibliography of, Prof. Mohamed Bey Khalil, 65
- Schlámmanalyse, Die, Dr. H. Gessner, 1061
- School Life*, January, 197
- Schwarzschild Relation, The Validity of the, as applied to the Use of the Logarithmic Sector, F. Twyman and A. Harvey, 770
- Sciara*, Differences between Chromosome Groups of Soma and Germ-line in, C. W. Metz and M. Louise Schmuck, 423
- Science: Advancement of, London and the, 687; Advancing, being Personal Reminiscences of the British Association in the Nineteenth Century, Sir Oliver Lodge, 982; and Agriculture in New Zealand, 981; and Curative Medicine (Stephen Paget Memorial Lecture), Dr. H. H. Dale, 499; and Humanity, 505; and Industry, Creative, 317; and Service, 921; and Technology, The International Congress of the History of, Dr. T. Greenwood, 77; at a New Angle, 562; at the Cross Roads. Papers presented to the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology . . . by the Delegates of the U.S.S.R., 170; Bibliography of, Classification for, Dr. S. C. Bradford, 268; in the City of London, Engr.-Capt. E. C. Smith, 515; Man of, The Faith of a, Sir Daniel Hall, 1069; Museum: A New Children's Gallery at the, 994; Sir Richard Glazebrook appointed Chairman of the Advisory Council of the, 184; National Teaching of, Problems in the (Pedler Lecture), Prof. I. Masson, 753; Post-Primary, W. F. F. Shearcroft. Book 1: First Year's Course, 960; The Beginnings of, Dr. C. Singer, 7; The Recorded Data of, 662; The Social Function of, Prof. C. H. Desch, 824
- Scientific: Abstracting Services, Organisation of, A. A. Eldridge, 1004; and Industrial Research, Department of, Dr. F. S. Sinnatt appointed Director of Fuel Research, 1072; and Technical Books, Recent: July 25, v; Aug. 22, v; Oct. 31, v; Nov. 28, v; Dec. 26, v; Management Problems, 1008; Men as Administrators, 237; Research and Invention, The Value of, Prince of Wales, 60; World-Picture of To-day, The, Genl. J. C. Smuts, 521
- Scorodite from Kiura Mine, Bungo, Kiushiu, Japan, T. Ito and T. Shiga, 977
- Scottish Marine Fauna, Studies in the, R. Elmhirst, 42
- Scylliorhinus Canicula*, The Physiological Nature of the Diastase, secreted by the Eclosion Gland in, Ouang Te Yio, 846
- Sea: -Angling Fishes of the Cape (South Africa), C. L. Biden, 209; -elephant, A, at Cape Point, 634; -lion Census, A, P. Bonnet, 640; Phosphorescence of the, 843; Stars, South American, W. K. Fisher, 154; -urchin, Larvæ of the, Influence of Metallic Silver on the Calcification of the, G. Bohn and Mme. Anna Drzewina, 806; Water, Irradiation of, by Ultra-Violet Rays, etc., L. Sanzo and F. Pirrone, 806
- Seed Analysis, Commercial, British Association of, Annual Meeting of the, 265
- Seedlings in some Grasses, Latency of, H. G. Chippindale, 1075
- Seeds, Damaged, Germination of, 307
- Seismological: Committee of the British Association, Report of the, 580; Messages, a Provisional Code for, 994; Stations, New, 181
- Seminal Vesicle, Regulation of the Secretory Activity of the, H. Burchardt, 468
- Serpent Worship, W. D. Hambly, 1043
- Serum Albumin, Temperature Stability and Denaturation of, Dr. K. O. Pedersen, 150
- Service, Science and, 921
- Sex Rites and Customs: A Bibliography of, an Annotated Record of Books, Articles, and Illustrations in all Languages, R. Goodland, 892
- Sheep, A Naked, E. T. Popova-Wassina, 866
- Sheffield University: appointment of B. H. Bentley as Professor of Botany, of Dr. R. N. Rudmose Brown as Professor of Geography, of L. E. S. Eastham as Professor of Zoology, of Dr. J. Florey as Professor of Pathology, and Dr. J. W. Edington as Professor of Bacteriology, 1048; Prof. J. H. Andrew appointed Professor of Metallurgy, 975
- Shells, Industrial, of the Philippines, F. Talavera and L. A. Faustino, 676
- Shipping, Engineering, and Machinery Exhibition, The, 488
- Ship-waves, Rhythmic Breaking of, Prof. Kerr Grant, 838
- Shoalhaven River Valley, Physiography of the, F. A. Craft (1), 279; (2), (3), 387
- Short Wave Reception and Ultra-Radiation, Dr. W. M. H. Schulze, 837
- Shoshonean Linguistics, Dr. E. Sapir, 379
- Shrikes, The Impaling Instinct of, A. H. Miller, 1005
- Siam: Nature and Industry, 209
- Siderolite from Bencubbin, Western Australia, A New, E. S. Simpson and D. G. Murray, 977
- Sigma Scorpii, B. H. Dawson, 1081
- Silica: remaining after attacking Leucite with Acids, Certain Properties of the, G. A. Blanc, 647; Vessels, Influence of Hydrogen on Chemical Changes in, Prof. M. W. Travers, L. E. Hockin, and T. J. P. Pearce, 66
- Silkworms, Starch Digestion in, Osamu Shinoda, 497
- Silver: Bivalent, Paramagnetism of, Prof. G. T. Morgan and Dr. S. Sugden, 31; and Mercury, Alloys of, Constitution of the, Dr. A. J. Murphy, 554, 1082



- Simonis Reaction, Application of the, to Monohydric Phenols, A. Robertson, 908
- Slate, X-Ray Analysis of, H. V. Anderson and K. C. Chesley, 1043
- Sleep, Bodily Position in Restful, Dr. H. M. Johnson, 190
- Slide Rule : A Manual of the, its History, Principle, and Operation. Second edition, 563
- Smallpox Prevention, Review of certain Aspects of, 148
- Smekal-Raman-Effekt, Der, Prof. K. W. F. Kohlrausch, 1026
- Smithsonian Institution : Explorations and Field-work, 1930, 147
- Smoke Abatement Handbook, 1034
- Smooth Surfaces, On the Contact of, S. H. Bastow and F. P. Bowden, 881
- Snakes : Attraction of, to Dead Ones, 329 ; Insectivorous, Prof. F. J. Meggitt, 413
- Soap and Detergent Industry, The Modern, Dr. G. Martin. Second edition. 2 vols., 625
- Social Economics, Industrial and, 773
- Société : française des Electriciens, title of Honorary Member of the, conferred on P. F. Rowell, 834 ; Zoologique de France, Sir Sidney F. Harmer elected an Honorary Member of the, 29
- Society Islands, Class Distinction in the, Dr. E. S. C. Handy, 459
- Soda, The Reduction of, P. Villard, 978
- Soies artificielles et matières plastiques, R. Gabillion, 855
- Soil : *Bulletin*, The, 298 ; Classification, L. L. Lee, 677 ; Science, The Aims and Objects of, Prof. I. de V. Malherbe, 801 ; The Physical Properties of the, Dr. B. A. Keen, 391
- Soils, The Interchange of, L. I. Jones, 668
- Solar : Corona, Forms of the, and their Origin, Dr. W. J. S. Lockyer, 784 ; Radiations, Influence of the, on the Temperature of the Bodies of Insects, J. D. Strelnikov, 125 ; System, The Origin of the, Sir James Jeans, 432
- Solid State, The Architecture of the, Prof. W. L. Bragg (Kelvin Lecture), 210, 248
- Solution, Association Theory of, and Inadequacy of Dissociation Theory, Jitendra Nath Rakshit, Rai Sheheb, 852
- Solutions, Constitution of, deduced from Absorption Measurements, P. Vaillant, 918
- Solvents, Dr. T. H. Durrans, 958
- Sonora, Mexico, Land Birds of, A. J. van Rossem, 190
- Soral (Canton of Geneva), The Phreatic Sheet of, E. Joukowsky, 235
- Sound : in Tubes : Velocity of, Ultrasonic Method, G. S. Field, 117 ; Production, The Effective Mass of Flexible Disks and Conical Diaphragms used for, Dr. N. W. McLachlan, 733
- Sounds, Isolated, Articulation of, C. E. Parmenter, S. N. Trevino, and C. A. Bevans, 380
- South : Africa : medal of the South African Association, award of the, to Prof. H. B. Fantham, 29 ; New Game Reserves in, Prof. H. B. Fantham, 992 ; African Association : 1932, election of Prof. P. J. du Toit as President, 802 ; Grahamstown Meeting. Presentation of South Africa Medal and grant to Prof. H. B. Fantham, 801 ; Museum, Progress of the, 265 ; Tribe, Ethnological Survey of a, 614 ; Australia, The Rift Valleys of, Dr. C. Fenner, 155 ; London : Botanical Institute, Twenty-first Anniversary of the, 697 ; Entomological and Natural History Society, *Proceedings* for 1931-32, 635 ; Russian Steppe Graves, Prof. V. Gordon Childe, 190
- Southampton, University College of : Wing Comdr. T. R. Cave-Browne-Cave appointed Professor of Engineering and H. Leech Experimental Engineer, 681 ; S. Weintraub appointed an Assistant Lecturer in Physics at, 278
- Southern : Equatorial Africa, Proposed Compilation of a Geological Map of, 438 ; Rhodesian Geology, R. Tyndall-Biscoe, 971 ; Whaling, Sir Sidney F. Harmer, 292
- Soviet Science, Prof. F. S. Marvin, 170
- Space Lattice ? A Two-Dimensional : Dr. R. C. Menzies, 907 ; W. Baker, 1078
- Spark, Formation of a, F. G. Dunnington, 1081
- Sparrows, London, Degeneracy in, 180
- Spatial Distance in General Relativity, On the Definition of, H. S. Ruse, 882
- Special Libraries and Information Bureaux, Association of, 644
- Spectra, Index of, late Dr. W. Marshall Watts. Appendix Z : Iron and Iron Oxide, 1060
- Spectrum : Se III., The Structure of the, J. S. Badami and Dr. K. R. Rao, 496 ; Sensibility of Photoelectric Cells, Extension of the, under the Action of Oxygen, G. Dejardin, 83
- Speech and Music, Reproduction of, Modern Apparatus for the, Dr. N. W. McLachlan, 517
- 'Spekker' Photometer, The, for Ultra-Violet Spectrophotometry, F. Twyman, 770
- Spektroskopie, Handbuch der, Prof. H. Kayser und Prof. H. Konen. Band 7, Lief. 2, 1061
- Spherical Astronomy, Text-Book on, Prof. W. M. Smart, 207
- Sp. hispanicum* var. *maroccanum*, The Jackal and Hedgehog Reservoirs of, P. Delanoë, 770
- Spiral Nebulæ, The Apparent Recession of the, M. L. Humason, 461
- Spiriferidæ, The British Carboniferous Reticulate, T. N. George, 1012
- Squilla*, Anal Gland of, T. Komai and Y. M. Tung, 762
- Stainless Metals, Sir Harold Carpenter, 382
- Star : Apparent Diameter of a, Calculation of the, P. Rossier, 734 ; Density in Different Galactic Latitudes, P. J. Melotte, 192
- Stars : Collapsed, and Novæ, Prof. E. A. Milne, 587 ; Double : Catalogue of, 1045 ; Measures of, Prof. F. P. Leavenworth. With which are included the Measures by W. O. Beal, 743 ; in their Courses, The, Sir James Jeans, 615 ; of High Luminosity, The, Cecilia H. Payne, 615 ; White Dwarf : Constitution of, Seitarô Suzuki, 838 ; The Internal Temperature of, Prof. E. A. Milne, 999 ; with Nebulæ, Impact of, K. Hirayama, 156
- Statistics and Actuarial Science, Some Recent Researches in the Theory of, Prof. J. F. Steffensen, 286
- Steel : Industry, the British Heavy, Prof. H. Stanley Jevons, 678 ; Mild, in Hot-galvanising, Attack on, E. J. Daniels, 594
- Stellar : Energy, Atomic Synthesis and, Dr. R. d'E. Atkinson, 194 ; Photometry, A. S. Fairley, 461 ; Rotation, Dr. E. A. Kreiken, 308 ; Velocities, Measurement of, Absorption Spectra of Crystals at Low Temperatures as References in the, S. Freed, 33
- Stereoisomerism of Derivatives of 1:1'-dinaphthyl, A. Corbellini, 1014
- Sterilisation : and Mental Deficiency, 129 ; Human, pamphlet on, 111
- Sternkunde : Die Geschichte der, von den ersten Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Prof. E. Zinner, 986
- Stipa nitida*, The Autecology of, T. G. B. Osborn, J. G. Wood, and T. B. Paltridge, 918
- Stocks, Ever-sporting, A Satellite missing from, Dr. J. Philp and Prof. C. L. Huskins, 970
- Storm of July 24, 1930, in the Treviso-Udine District : A. Puppo, 199 ; A. Puppo and P. Longo, 466
- Strangeways Research Laboratory, Cambridge, Report of the, 792
- Stratified Clouds : Electrical Conditions in, Dr. M. Graham, 969 ; The Forms of, Part 1 : Experimental ; Part 2 : Discussion, Sir Gilbert Walker and A. C. Phillips, 917
- Stratigraphy, General, Prof. J. W. Gregory and B. H. Barrett, 945
- Streaks in Chemical Studies, E. Schally (4), 468
- Street : Lighting : Tests on, 996 ; The British Standard Specification for, C. C. Paterson, 488 ; Traffic : Control by Visual Signals, 180 ; Engineering, Dr. M. McClintock, 1033
- Stresses : in Welded and Riveted Connexions, Distribution of, W. Hovgaard, 555 ; in Wheels, Prof. E. G. Coker, 174
- Stretta*, The Struggle of Cereals against, R. Perotti, 735
- Strontium and Barium, New Isotopes of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 221
- Strukturbericht, 1913-1928, P. P. Ewald und C. Hermann, 511



- Strychnos henningsii*, The Alkaloids of the Bark of, M. Rindl, 200
- 'Sub-genes', A Hypothesis of, Sturtevant and Schultz, 273
- Sudanese Kingdom: A, an Ethnographical Study of the Jukun-speaking Peoples of Nigeria, C. K. Meek, 285
- Sugar Cane: -Breeding Stations, proposed, 181; Mosaic, Immunity to, acquired by the Host, E. M. East, 555; Research Conference, Imperial, 1931, 160
- Sugars from Human Milk, Two New, Gyrolactose and Allolactose, M. Polonovski and A. Lespagnol, 125
- Sulphides of the Rare Earths, Study of some, Picon and Cogné, 882
- Sulphur: and Growth, L. Binet and J. Magrou, 466; The Photochemical Oxidation of, R. Dubrisay and R. Pallu, 646
- Sulphuric Acid, The Comparative Hydration of, and of the Alkaline Bisulphates, J. B. Senderens, 199
- Sun, The horizontal Diameter of the, in 1929 and 1930, G. Armellini, 1014
- Sunshine, Bright, A Method of recording, W. A. Thomson, 15
- Superconductivity: a Polarisation Phenomenon, Prof. J. C. McLennan, 373; at High Frequencies, Prof. J. C. McLennan, A. C. Burton, A. Pitt, and J. O. Wilhelm, 1004
- Surface: Conductivity, Electrokinetics and the Interpretation of, McBain and Du Bois, 677; Films, A Method of Studying, Prof. E. Gorter and W. A. Seeder, 413
- Surnames: of the British Isles: A History of a Concise Account of their Origin, Evolution, Etymology, and Legal Status, C. L'Estrange Ewen, 891; The Story of, W. D. Bowman, 743
- Surveying: from Air Photographs, Capt. M. Hotine, 946; The New, 946
- Swanley Horticultural College, Dr. Catherine C. Steele appointed Lecturer in Agricultural Chemistry and Physics in, 197
- Swedish: Ironfields, 384; Turnip (*Brassica napus* L. var. *napobrassica* (L.) Reichb.), On a Method of Distinguishing the Seedlings of, from those of Broad-leaved Rape (*Brassica napus* L. var. *biennis* (Schubl at Mart) Reichb.), M. J. Gorman and H. A. Lafferty, 162
- Switzerland and Swiss Industrial and Economic Development, Faraday's Connexion with, Prof. C. E. Guye, 349
- Symbiose, Tier und Pflanze in, Dr. P. Buchner, 558
- Symbiosis, 558
- Symons Gold Medal of the Royal Meteorological Society, award of the, to Prof. V. F. K. Bjerknes, 931
- Syphilis, Detection of, Dr. L. V. Blina, 459
- Tadpoles, The Splenectomy of, Daphne L. Coulston, 316
- Tanning and Unexposed Skin Colour, Correlation between, as recorded by the Colour Top, F. Clements, 423
- Tannery, Paul: and the History of Science, Prof. F. S. Marvin, 613; Mémoires scientifiques de, Publiés par L.-L. Heiberg et H.-G. Zeuthen. Tome 10 (Suppt. au Tome 6): Sciences modernes, généralités, historiques, 1892-1930. Édité avec la collaboration de J. Pérès, 613
- Tartaric Acid and Copper, Spectrographic Study of the Compounds of, J. Giuntini, 646
- Taste and Chemical Constitution, A. L. Fox, 124
- Tchistaya-Gora Deposits in the Southern Ural, The Pyrophyllite from the, S. Kurbatov, 770
- Technical: Colleges, Applied Chemistry in, 678; Man, The Faith of a, O. Bloch, 901
- Telegraph and Radio Telegraphic Transmissions, Secrecy of, E. Belin, 421
- Telephony in Large Cities, Progress of, 330
- Telescope Mirrors, Silvering, G. Tiercy, 236
- Television: and Atmospherics, T. Bray, 439; Progress of, 670
- Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itzá, Yucatan, The, E. H. Morris, J. Charlot, Ann Axtell Morris. 2 vols., 694
- Tensors: The Elementary Theory of, with Applications to Geometry and Mechanics, Prof. T. Y. Thomas, 626
- Ternary Heteroazeotrope formed of Carbon Disulphide, Acetone, and Water, The, W. Swietoslawski and Mlle. L. Wajcenblit, 918
- Terrestrial Vertebrates, Combination of Factors to which the Origin and the Development of, is due, M. A. Menzbier, 127
- Tertiary Foraminifera, Dr. W. A. Macfadyen; Dr. J. A. Cushman and J. D. Barksdale, 1080
- Testing of Materials, International Congress for the, 643; Dr. W. Rosenhain elected President for 1935, 644
- Tetanus and Tonus Substratum, Histology and Chemistry of, P. Krüger and F. Furlinger, 468
- Tetraethylammonium and Ammonium Salts, Conductivity of, Sir Harold Hartley, and others, 461
- Textile Research, 193
- Textiles: on Test: a Study for Distributor and Consumer of the Wearing and Washing Properties of Fabrics and Garments, J. G. Williams, 855; The Printing of, R. Capey, 855
- Thallium: and Uranium, Constitution of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 725; Indium and, Arc Spectrum of, Fine Structure in the, Dr. A. L. Narayan, 675; Pharmacology of, J. C. Munch and J. Silver, 383; The Atomic Weight of, Prof. H. V. A. Briscoe, and others, 763; II., Hyperfine Structure of, Dr. J. B. Green and J. Wulff; Dr. H. Schuler and J. E. Keyston, 409
- Thames, The Tidal, Sir Cyril Kirkpatrick, 789
- Theophylline Arabinoside, The Pyranoid Structure of Glucuronic Acid and of, J. Pryde and R. T. Williams, 187
- Thermionic Valves with Fall of Potential across the Grid, A. Lo Surdo, 734
- Thermocouples in a Vacuum, Some Properties of, J. Jaffray, 1086
- Thermodynamics, Generalised, Prof. G. N. Lewis, 498
- Thermometers, Distance, Negretti and Zambra, 972
- Thrips tabaci* as a Vector of Plant Virus Disease, G. Samuel and J. G. Bald, 494
- Thunderstorms, Point Discharge Measurements below, J. Schonland and C. A. Coppens, 200
- Thyratrons, An Application of, Dr. Wynn-Williams, 307
- Ticks, The Spermatogenesis of, Prof. E. Warren, 454
- Tide-gauge Measurements at Height Differences, D. la Cour, 875
- Tigroid, Chemical Nature of the, Prof. A. Szent-Györgyi, 761
- Time-Recording, Improvement in, A. L. Loomis, 38
- Titanium: A Reliable Method for the Quantitative Separation of, from Tantalum and Niobium, W. R. Schoeller and C. Jahn, 845; in the Tetrachloride, Valency, and Diamagnetism of, Dr. V. I. Vaidhianathan, 189
- Toad, Anterior Abdominal Vein in the, Prof. Ekdendranath Ghosh and Birendrakumar Mitra, 273
- Tobacco Plant, A New Virus Disease of the, Dr. H. H. Storey, 187
- Togoland, Tales told in, A. W. Cardinall. To which is added the Mythical and Traditional History of Dagomba, by E. F. Tamakloe, 1026
- Toluene: Benzene and, Raman Spectra of, L. E. Howlett, 796; The Transformation of, and of Xylene into Methane, A. Mailhe and Creusot, 466
- Tomlinson, The late Mr. Herbert, F.R.S., J. J. Abraham, 153
- Topography and Tradition, Prof. J. L. Myres, 938
- Tortoises, Giant, of Galapagos, Age of the, C. H. Townsend, 227
- Tragulidæ (Mammalia, Artidaetyla), The Generic Characters in the Family, K. K. Flerov, 503
- Transbaikalia, Northern, The Chemical Composition of the Water in the Hot Springs in, A. Frank-Kamenetskii and V. Koncevich, 422
- Translations, International Bibliography of, Proposed Formation of an, 405
- Transit Instrument, Systematic Use of the Rotation of the, G. Tiercy, 734
- Tree: Growth: and Weather, Hirokichi Nakashima, 840; Illumination and, Dr. W. R. G. Atkins and Florence A. Stanbury, 191; -Kangaroos at the London Zoological Gardens, 996; -Rings and the Sunspot Cycle, Dr. A. E. Douglass, 121



- Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria, C. K. Meek. Vol. 1, 285  
 Trichopterygida of Australia and Adjacent Islands, C. Deane, 387  
 Trifluorides of Aluminium, Iron, Cobalt, Rhodium, and Palladium, Structure of the, J. A. A. Ketelaar, 303, 440  
 Trigonometry, Advanced, C. V. Durell and A. Robson, 92  
 Trimethylene Hydrocarbons, Preparation of the, Lespiau and R. L. Wakeman, 235  
 Triton, Neptune's Satellite, Determination of the Mass of, 416, 800  
 Trogons, The Habits of, C. S. Webb, 935  
 Tropical: Agriculture, Principles of, Dr. H. A. Tempany and G. E. Mann, 954; Forests of the Caribbean, T. Gill, 1059  
 Trou du Turo, Communication of the, with the Goueuils de Jouéou, N. Casteret, 632  
 Tumours: Malignant, A Treatment for, A. C. Hendrik and E. F. Burton, 544; The Metabolism of, Investigations from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Biology, Berlin-Dahlem. Edited by O. Warburg. Translated by Dr. F. Dickens, 630  
 Tungsten and Molybdenum, Organic Compounds of, containing Sulphur, L. Debucquet and L. Velluz, 422  
 Turbines, Rotors of, The Secular Stability of the, E. Jouguet, 1049  
 Turbulence in a River, Dr. H. Jeffreys, 1078  
 Turnips, Disease-resisting, W. M. Findlay, 414  
 Type Cultures, Catalogue of the National Collection of. Third edition, 671  
 Tyrrel medal of the Royal Society of Canada, award of the, to Dr. L. J. Burpee, 275  
 Uganda, Geological Survey of, Summary of Progress of the, 1919-1929, E. J. Wayland, 331  
 Ultra: -cinematograph, Apparatus for the Study of the Phenomena of Injection and of Combustion in Motors by the, L. and A. Seguin and A. Labarthe, 421; -Radiation, Short Wave Reception and, Dr. W. M. H. Schulze, 837; -sonics: Some Properties of Inaudible Sound, Prof. F. L. Hopwood, 748; -Violet: Absorption Spectra of Pure Hydrochloric Acid and Bromine, The, Mme. N. Demassieux and V. Henri, 882; Light: of the Sky, An Apparatus for Recording the, Dr. P. W. Cunliffe, 35; Utilisation of, in Photoelectric Cells with Glass Bulbs, G. Dejaridin, 83; Radiation, the Spectral Erythemic Reaction of the Human Skin to, W. W. Coblentz, R. Stair, and J. M. Hogue, 555; Rays and Mosquito Larvae, Dr. M. E. MacGregor, 68; Window Glass, A. Q. Tool and R. Stair, 549  
 Unemployment Problem, Scientific Aspects of the, 281  
 Unified Field Theory, On the, T. Y. Thomas (3), 83  
 Unitary Theory of Gravitation and Electricity (2), P. Straneo, 1014  
 United States of America: Faraday's Researches and the, Prof. W. R. Whitney, 353; Department of Agriculture, Report of, Dr. C. L. Marlatt, 612; National Research Council, Report of the, 219; The Pulp-Wood Market in the, 313  
 Universe: An Outline of the, J. G. Crowther, 627; The Evolution of the, 699; Sir James Jeans, 701; Abbé G. Lemaître, 704; Prof. W. de Sitter, 706; Sir Arthur Eddington, 709; Prof. R. A. Millikan, 709; Prof. E. A. Milne, 715; General J. C. Smuts, 718; Bishop E. W. Barnes, 719; Sir Oliver Lodge, 722; The Expanding, Sir Arthur Eddington, 821  
 Universities: American, English, German, Dr. A. Flexner, 811; of the Empire: Congress of, 41, 158  
 University: College, London, The New Ramsay Memorial Laboratory of Chemical Engineering at, 833, 1046; Functions, A Doctrine of, 811; The Purpose of a, Prof. S. Alexander, 385; Training in relation to Industry, 1017; Women, International Federation of, Report of Council Meeting, 1049  
 Unsaturated Organic Compounds, Reactions of addition to, P. Pratesi, 1050  
 Upper: Atmosphere: Measurement of Pressure and Temperature in the, Dr. A. K. Das, B. B. Ray, and D. N. Dasgupta; E. V. Newham, 878; Phenomena of the, Prof. S. Chapman, 415, (Bakerian Lecture) 464; Winds over the Oceans, Observations of, Comdr. L. G. Garbett, 62  
 Ur: A Season's Work at, al-'Ubaid, Abu Shahrain (Eridu), and Elsewhere, Dr. H. R. Hall, 131  
 Uranium: Mineral, A New, Ross, Henderson, and Posnjak, 155; Thallium and, Constitution of, Dr. F. W. Aston, 725  
 Uredinospores of Black Stem Rust of Wheat, *Puccinia graminis tritici*, Effect of Light on, W. A. R. Dillon Weston, 67  
 Uric Acid, Excretion of: Dr. J. Needham, 152; Dr. V. B. Wigglesworth, 116  
 Urine, Excretion of, The Energy Cost of the, H. Borsook and H. M. Winegarden, 83  
 Uronic Anhydride Groups in Pectic Substances, A Micro-method for the Determination of, H. W. Buxton, 1086  
*Ursus spelæus* Rosenm., The Metacarpalia and Metatarsalia of, A. A. Birula, 163  
 Uteroverdin, Dr. A. Lemberg, Prof. J. Barcroft, and Dr. D. Keilin, 967  
 Vacua, High, Production of, Andrews and Bacon, 121  
 Valency and Symmetry, P. Vinassa, 1014  
 Valonia, Penetration of 1-Naphthol-2-Sulphonate Indophenol, *o*-Chloro Phenol Indophenol, and *o*-Creso Indophenol into, Matilda Moldenhauer Brooks, 83  
 Valve: A Huge New, 823; Generator with very Stable Frequency, A, P. David, 82  
 Vanadiferous Nodules on the Coast of South Devon, Occurrence of, G. E. L. Carter, 42  
 Van Eyck, Jean, Reconstitution of the Painting Technique of, J. Maroger, 978  
 Vanillin in Chocolate and Cocoa Butter, Determination of, D. M. Freeland, 845  
 Vanishing Life of Australia, 425  
 Vapour Pressure, Polarity and, Dr. A. R. Martin, 456  
*Vasculum*, November, 1071  
 Vector Analysis, Introduction to, L. R. Shorter, 626  
 Vectors on Surfaces, Rigid Transports of, P. Nalli, 1050  
 Vertebrate Heart, The Primitive Conducting Mechanisms of the, Tudor Jones, 881  
 Vertebrates: Early Stages of Development of the, G. L. Purser, 42; the possible Conditions of Origin of the, The Composition of the Blood of Aquatic Animals and its bearings upon, Prof. W. J. Dakin, 66  
 Vestibular Apparatus, The Physiology of the, Prof. M. Camis. Translated and Annotated by Dr. R. S. Creed, 815  
*Veterinary: Bulletin*, The, 1036; *Journal*, October, 904  
 Vibrograph, Photographic, Askania-Werke A.-G., 460  
 Victorian Grapholite Zones, J. Harris and R. A. Keble, 467  
*Vikingen*, The Whaling Factory Ship, with some Notes on Whaling, C. F. Christensen, 56  
 Vinča, Recent Excavations at, Prof. M. Vassitz, 842  
 Viruses: Nature of, Prof. A. E. Boycott, 727; The Biological Nature of the, Dr. H. H. Dale, 599  
 Viscometry, A Monograph of, Dr. G. Barr; E. Hatschek, 947  
 Viscosity of Liquids, Prof. E. N. da C. Andrade, 835  
 Vitamin: A and the Antimony Chloride Reaction, E. Emmerie, M. v. Eekelen, and Prof. L. K. Wolff, 495; D, Crystalline, F. A. Askew, Miss H. M. Bruce, Dr. R. K. Callow, J. St. L. Philpot, and T. A. Webster, 758  
 Vitamins: Chemistry of the, Sir F. Gowland Hopkins, and others, 39, 842; The, Prof. H. C. Sherman and S. L. Smith, 743  
 Vivisection, Vesalius on, B. Farrington, 125  
 Vocational Guidance, 393  
 Voice and Personality, Prof. T. H. Pear, 657  
 Vole Cycle in Britain, The, A. D. Middleton, 36  
 Volta Conference at Rome, The, 861  
 Washington, George, Bridge, The, 790  
 Water: Gas Process: The, a Study of the Carbon and Thermal Balance, 146; Plants, Two, The Celluloses of, J. C. Earl and Miss T. M. Reynolds, 316; Molecules, Reflection of, at the Liquid Surface, Prof. T. Alty, 72; The Dissociation of, E. G. Linder, 799; Vapour in the Dissociation of a Salt Hydrate, Function of, B. Topley and M. L. Smith, 302



- Wave : Equation, The Cosmical Constant and the, Sir Arthur Eddington, 763 ; Mechanics : Application of, to Nuclear Physics, A. Schidlof, 734 ; of Free Electrons, The, Prof. G. P. Thomson, 47
- Weather : Forecasting, Development of, C. K. M. Douglas, 768 ; Foreshadowing, 384 ; of August, The, 542
- Weevils of Samoa, Sir Guy Marshall, 676
- Weiss Units, The Theoretical Magneton Numbers in, Dr. C. J. Gorter, 68
- Wellcome Research Institution : Address by Lord Moynihan at the laying of the Corner-stone of the, 931, 974
- Were-Tigers in India, L. A. Cammiade, 728
- West : Africa, Prehistory of, P. Laforgue, 839 ; Indian Insect Pests, Control of, Dr. A. D. Imms, 878 ; Tropical Africa, Flora of, J. Hutchinson and Dr. J. M. Dalziel. Vol. 2, Part 1, 952
- Whaling : Modern, 56 ; Southern, Sir Sidney F. Harmer, 292
- Wheat, Respiration of, at Low Temperature, Newton and Brown, 970
- White Dwarf Stars, Constitution of, Seitarô Suzuki, 838
- White, George Robert, Gold Medal of Honor of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, award of the, to Dr. F. V. Colville, 1034
- White, Gilbert, Journals of, edited by W. Johnson, 952
- Will to Live : The, an Outline of Evolutionary Psychology, J. H. Badley, 954
- Wire-drawing, Experiments in, W. E. Alkins, (2), 594 ; W. E. Alkins and W. Cartwright, 554
- Wireless : Beacon Stations, Three New Automatic, 218 ; Broadcasting Service from the Southern Hemisphere, World-wide, 217 ; Communication, A Retrospect of, Sir Oliver Lodge, 591 ; Echoes of Short Delay, Prof. E. V. Appleton and G. Builder, 918 ; Waves in the Southern Hemisphere, Polarisation of Downcoming, Prof. E. V. Appleton, 1037
- Wires drawn through Rotating Dies, H. Greenwood and Prof. F. C. Thompson, 152
- Wissahickon Hills : The, Memories of Leisure Hours out of Doors in an Old Countryside, Prof. C. Weygandt, 208
- Wolf of Corea, The, Yoshio Abe, 71
- Wood : Anatomists, International Association of, Constitution of an, 298 ; and Wood Charcoal Fragments, Identification of, J. C. Maby, 733 ; Fibres, The Tertiary Wall of, S. H. Clarke, 1078 ; Preservation, Research in, R. S. Pearson, and others, 1083 ; Saccharification of, Dr. H. A. Auden and W. P. Joshua, 1045 ; The Mechanical Properties of, Prof. G. A. Garratt, 961
- Woolmen, Company of, Medals of the, awarded to Miss Emma Stott, and K. Nicholls, 757
- Wools, Hairs and, Prof. J. Glaister, 227
- Work : How you, an Introduction to the Human Body, Dr. Isabel Wilson, 136
- World : List of Scientific Periodicals", "The, Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, 70 ; Mapped : The, being a Short History of attempts to Map the World from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century, Dr. I. J. Curnow, 289
- Worsted Open Drawing, S. Kershaw, 1060
- Wyoming, Central, Pictographs, Dr. E. B. Renaud, 910
- Xenon, Krypton and, F. J. Allen and R. B. Moore, 380
- Xenopus laevis*, The Adrenal Secretion of, D. Epstein, J. W. C. Gunn, E. Epstein, and G. Rimer, 126 ; The Reaction of, to Digitalis, J. W. C. Gunn and D. Epstein, 126
- Xenotime, The Decomposition of the Absorption Bands of, by a Transverse Magnetic Field, J. Becquerel and L. Matout, 466
- X-ray : Apparatus and Appliances, Catalogue of, Medical Supply Association, Ltd., 112 ; Crystal Analysis, Report on the Application of, to Industrial Problems, 933 ; Diffraction Intensities, Anomalous, W. A. Wood, 272 ; Fibre Photography, S. Zeidenfeld, 70 ; Medical Unit, Portable, Watson and Sons (Electro-medical), Ltd., 1007 ; Wave-lengths, Absolute, Dr. J. A. Bearden, 156
- X-rays : An Effect of, on Matter, G. I. Pokrowski, 875 ; Intensity of Total Scattering of, by Gases (1 and 2), Y. H. Woo, 1014 ; Part-Absorption in, Dr. B. B. Ray and B. B. Datta, 224 ; Reflection of : R. T. W. Bingham, and others, 641 ; Some Experiments concerning the, B. Demetrovič, 882
- Yaksas, Dr. A. Coomaraswamy, 71
- Yard, Determination of the, in Wave-lengths of Light : Dr. A. E. H. Tutton, 840 ; J. E. Sears, Jr. ; Dr. A. E. H. Tutton, 965
- Yeast : Cell, Action of the Ultra-Violet and X-Rays on the, G. Nadson and E. A. Stern, 467 ; Cells : Methylene Blue Stain for, Fink and Weinfurter, 306 ; The Specific Inhibition of the Alcoholic Fermentation of, J. Cayrol and L. Genevois, 199
- Yeasts : from the North Polar Ocean, G. Nadson and G. Burgwitz, 682 ; The Combined Action of Metals and of X-Rays on, G. Nadson and E. Stern, 503
- Yellow Fever in Monkeys and Mice, Behaviour of the Virus of, A. W. Sellards, 555
- Young's : Modulus for Steel in Two Directions in a Bar, G. A. Wedgwood, 733 ; Theory of Colour Vision, Sir John H. Parsons, 123
- Youth and Power : the Diversions of an Economist, C. R. Fay, 955
- Yucatan : Exploration of, by Aeroplane, 866 ; The Temples of, Work of the Scientific Restorer, 692
- Zea mays*, A Correlation of Cytological and Genetical Crossing-over in, Harriet B. Creighton and Barbara McClintock, 1014
- Zeeman Effect : Observation of the, with High Frequency, L. and E. Bloch, F. Esclangon, and P. Lacroute, 386 ; of a Forbidden Line, E. Segrè and Dr. C. J. Bakker, 1076
- Zeolites, Studies on the, Part 2, M. H. Hey, 42
- Zimbabwe, Great, The Occupation of, J. F. Schofield, 791
- Zirconium : Oxide, The Band Spectrum of, Miss F. Lowater, 917 ; The Arc Spectrum of, Dr. and Mrs. Kiess, 228
- Zoological : Society : of London, award of the Silver Medal to A. St. Alban Smith, 332 ; Gardens, Acquisitions in the, 102 ; Dr. B. Barnett appointed Curator of Reptiles at the, 1036 ; Walruses in the, 329 ; Survey of India, 849
- Zoology : An Introduction to, P. W. Gideon, 952 ; Living, 242
- Zoos and National Parks, Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, 578
- Zooxanthellæ, Corals and, The Significance of the Relationship between, Dr. C. M. Yonge, 309

The various Supplements should be collated and bound with the numbers with which they were issued.





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“To the solid ground  
Of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye.”—WORDSWORTH.

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1931.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Safety Work in Chemical Industries . . . . .	1
Radioactivity and the Atomic Nucleus. By Prof. Arthur H. Compton . . . . .	3
Man's Remote Ancestry. By Prof. G. Elliot Smith, F.R.S. . . . .	4
Gold Resources of the World. By Dr. William Cullen . . . . .	4
Short Reviews . . . . .	6
The Beginnings of Science. By Dr. Charles Singer . . . . .	7
Population Problems . . . . .	10
Obituary :	
Mr. W. F. Denning. By H. P. H. . . . .	12
News and Views . . . . .	14
Letters to the Editor :	
Embryology and the Theory of Polyhedra.—Prof. D'Arcy W. Thompson, O.B., F.R.S. . . . .	31
Effect of Certain Substances and of Heat on Cells of <i>Abraxas</i> .—Prof. J. Brontë Gatenby and Joyce C. Hill . . . . .	31
Paramagnetism of Bivalent Silver.—Prof. G. T. Morgan, O.B.E., F.R.S., and Dr. S. Sugden . . . . .	31
Forestry Practice and Research.—A. C. Forbes . . . . .	31
The Age of Flint.—Maurice Burton . . . . .	32
Absorption Spectra of Crystals at Low Temperature as References in the Measurement of Stellar Velocities.—Simon Freed . . . . .	33
Mortality among Plants and its Bearing on Natural Selection.—R. Weatherall . . . . .	33
The Heat of Dissociation of Fluorine.—Manohar S. Desai . . . . .	34
Hyperfine Structure in the Rubidium Spectrum.—D. A. Jackson . . . . .	34
Hail Storm, June 14, at Doncaster.—N. L. Silvester . . . . .	35
An Apparatus for Recording the Ultra-Violet Light of the Sky.—Dr. P. W. Cunliffe . . . . .	35
Records of Actinic Value of Daylight.—Geo. J. Gibbs . . . . .	35
Experiments in Prophylaxis.—Sir Flinders Petrie, F.R.S. . . . .	35
Crystal Structure of Molybdenum Trioxide: A Correction.—Nora Wooster . . . . .	35
Research Items . . . . .	36
Astronomical Topics . . . . .	38
Recent Advances in the Chemistry of the Vitamins . . . . .	39
University and Educational Intelligence . . . . .	41
Birthdays and Research Centres . . . . .	41
Societies and Academies . . . . .	42
Official Publications Received . . . . .	43
Diary of Societies . . . . .	44
SUPPLEMENT.	
Standards of Measurement: Their History and Development. By Sir Richard Glazebrook, K.C.B., F.R.S. . . . .	17

Safety Work in Chemical Industries.

THE common impression that chemical industry is exceptionally dangerous is largely derived from such disasters as the serious explosion at the Royal Naval Cordite Factory, Holton Heath, on June 23, in which ten men were killed and three seriously injured. Like the Castleford disaster of last year, the explosion originated in the nitrating house, and indicates the devastating effects of chemical processes which are allowed to get out of control.

In spite of the poisonous and dangerous materials and the high temperatures and pressures which are frequently used, the accident rate in chemical industry compares very favourably with that of other industries, in a number of which both the frequency rate and the severity rate of accidents are considerably higher. This position is the result not only of experience but also of accurate and scientific control of the manufacturing processes. Chemical manufacturers are now well aware of the dangers connected with their industry, and take every possible step to reduce the number of accidents in chemical industry and develop adequate safety measures.

It is, indeed, significant that even in processes which to the ordinary person appear to involve the greatest risks, the accident rate, as a result of exceptionally strict control, is even lower than normal. The price of safety is unceasing vigilance, and the characteristic of chemical industry is not a high accident rate, but the appalling consequences which may attend the single slip or oversight on the part of the human element, which is responsible for 90 per cent of industrial accidents. The Castle-



ford disaster may apparently be traced to the neglect to sample the waste acid storage tanks in the ordinary way, the Home Office inspectors observing that proper sampling might have led to detection of the presence of the nitro-compound in the acid mixer and allowed suitable precautions to be taken.

Even the strictest control may, however, at times be thwarted by some abnormal conditions, and if, as at Holton Heath, responsible officials such as the chemist in charge perish in the explosion, or, as at Chatterley, Stoke-on-Trent, on June 3, lose their lives in attempts at its control, it is difficult to detect the abnormal circumstances responsible and devise precautions to prevent its recurrence. This emphasises both the need for research into the causes of accidents and the importance of correlating, by publication, abstracting, and indexing, the information obtained by research or other means.

As noted in a recent article in NATURE (May 30, p. 805), to this formidable problem scientific workers have as yet given inadequate attention. Much valuable work has already been done, especially in chemical industry, which compares very favourably with other industries. In Germany, the work of the Berufsgenossenschaft der chemische Industrie is well known, and its publication in *Die chemische Industrie* of illustrated notes on accidents, safety precautions, and devices compiled by the technical inspectors receives a wide circulation. In Great Britain, the efforts of the Association of British Chemical Manufacturers, which in the last two years has undertaken the task of abstracting, indexing, and publishing safety information pertaining to chemical industry, are by no means so well known as they should be. The Association has published quarterly, since January 1930, a classified summary of safety information, derived not only from published literature but also from the records of the Association. The latter include information supplied privately by members of the Association, and this adds very considerably to their value. The wider the membership of the Association, and the more fully its members co-operate in this work by pooling their information on safety matters, the more effective and invaluable its Safety Summary will become.

In addition to the Safety Summary, the Association of British Chemical Manufacturers has for several years published what are termed "Safety Circulars". These are single sheets dealing with accidents which either present some unusual feature or indicate some useful precaution. The circular

usually describes briefly the accident and its cause, and gives the views of the Works Technical Committee of the Association as to the precautions necessary to avoid repetition of the accident. Recent circulars have dealt with the escape of sulphuric acid in transfer by air pressure from a tank waggon to a raised storage tank, fires at a tar distillation plant and benzole plant, the bursting of a drum of phenol by compressed air, and fires at cellulose spraying plants. Such circulars are obviously of an interest which is not confined to chemical industry in the narrower sense. This is recognised by the Association, which holds the view that safety information, like medical science, should receive the widest possible publication. Accordingly, not only has a system of co-operation been arranged for the pooling of information with French and German colleagues, but also the benefits of its safety service are available to non-members on payment of a suitable fee.

A further feature of the safety work of the Association of British Chemical Manufacturers is the "Model Safety Rules for Chemical Works", of which Part 1 and a first section of Part 2 have already been issued to its members. These rules, as indicated by Mr. J. Davidson Pratt in his recent address on "The Cleaning and Repair of Plant and Vessels containing Dangerous Materials" at the Chemical Session in the National Safety First Week at Leeds, in some respects go beyond the Chemical Works Regulations issued by the Home Office. The addition to which Mr. Pratt particularly referred was intended to prevent misunderstanding where the full implications of the regulations regarding the thorough removal of dangerous material might conceivably be overlooked.

In his paper, Mr. Pratt outlines the main types of risk attached to the cleaning of containers and the chief precautions to be taken. While the details to be followed may vary widely with different materials and classes of vessel, certain general principles can be enunciated. For these the widest publicity is desirable, especially since volatile and dangerous solvents are now widely used in industries where the scientific knowledge and control is by no means so prominent as in chemical industry. In such industries the design of plant to facilitate safe cleaning may be completely overlooked and the question of responsibility assumes great importance.

Even in chemical industry the term 'responsible person' does not always receive an interpretation consistent with its use in the Chemical Works Regulations. Many serious accidents have occurred



because the testing of stills or containers prior to repair work or entry by workmen has been entrusted to persons without adequate scientific knowledge. Under modern conditions, industrial safety requires the employment in industry generally of larger numbers of chemists and other responsible scientific workers. Under-staffing on the scientific side definitely increases the risks of operatives, and while it is probable that some delegation of responsibility is unavoidable under industrial conditions, the scientific and technical staff should be adequate to ensure thorough training of, and personal contact with, those to whom such responsibility is at any time delegated. It was a public-spirited policy which led the organisers of the British Association of Chemists to include in its programme the endeavour to secure legislation providing that certain prescribed operations should be under the direct control and supervision of a qualified chemist. While in practice such operations can frequently be carried out by well-trained assistants, their efficiency, especially from the safety point of view, depends upon uninterrupted personal contact with a responsible chemist upon whose experience and knowledge they can draw at once in emergency.

### Radioactivity and the Atomic Nucleus.

*Radiations from Radioactive Substances.* By Sir Ernest Rutherford, Dr. James Chadwick, and Dr. C. D. Ellis. Pp. xii + 588. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1930.) 25s. net.

THE appearance of a new book on radioactivity by Lord Rutherford and his associates is a noteworthy event in the world of physics. Rather than prepare a new edition of his standard treatise on "Radioactive Substances and their Radiations", the senior author has chosen to devote his present discussion primarily to the significant developments in radioactivity which have occurred since that treatise appeared. These developments deal primarily with the characteristics of the radiations from radioactive materials and the effects which they produce. In view of the present state of physics, and the fundamental questions associated with the outer part of the atom apparently well understood, and the atomic nucleus offering perhaps the most vital problem with which physics is now faced, we are fortunate to be presented with this clear and comprehensive account of the information regarding the nucleus which is afforded by studies in radioactivity. Nothing could be more timely.

One is impressed by the extent of the important information that has come from recent studies in radioactivity. Thus, among other things, discussions are found of the disintegration of atoms by alpha ray bombardment; the studies of nuclear charge and nuclear size by the scattering of alpha rays; the discovery of rare alpha, beta, and gamma particles of extraordinarily large energy, revealing hitherto unsuspected types of disintegration; the quantum mechanics theory which describes how radioactive disintegration is possible; magnetic beta ray spectra, and their associated gamma ray spectra, revealing nuclear energy levels and evidence that electrons as discrete entities may not exist within the nucleus; crystal measurements of gamma ray wave-lengths, and the precise confirmation of Einstein's photoelectric equation at very high frequencies; recent quantum theories of gamma ray scattering; experiments with cosmic rays and their significance regarding the origin of the rays. Many of these developments have resulted from the labours of the authors themselves, and none could be found better qualified to describe them.

Gradually our knowledge regarding the atomic nucleus becomes more precise. Experiments with scattered alpha rays have shown its minute size and its relative large mass. They have enabled us to measure its charge, and even to estimate the field of electric force in its neighbourhood. Further information on the latter point is given by the speed with which the alpha particles are ejected from the radioactive nucleus. Combining the evidence from these alpha ray experiments, it becomes evident that surrounding the nucleus there is a 'potential wall', which prevents alpha particles that are outside from entering the nucleus and those on the inside from escaping. We are thus afforded a basis for developing a quantum theory of radioactive disintegration according to which the probability of an alpha particle jumping this wall is greater if it has large energy, and a qualitative explanation of one of the fundamental laws of radioactivity is obtained. Studies of the sharpness of gamma ray lines suggest a nucleus in which planetary alpha particles correspond to the electrons of the outer atom; though how these particles are held together remains unknown. Similarly, the condition of the electrons in the nucleus remains unsolved. There is no gamma radiation that can be traced to these electrons, and when they appear as beta particles their energies are distributed over broad bands. Though much new light is shed by these studies in radioactivity, the nucleus of the atom,



with its hoard of energy, thus continues to present us with a fascinating mystery.

It is inevitable that in an undertaking of this magnitude not all parts of the treatment can be kept strictly up to date. Thus, for example, in discussing the spectra of gamma rays from crystals, though the important work of Thibaud (1925) and Frilley (1928) is mentioned, that of Steadman (1929), which reveals gamma rays of frequency much higher even than those observed with the magnetic spectrometer, is not referred to. The impression is, nevertheless, that the authors have covered the field with great thoroughness, and have made careful selection of the material that is included.

For those who are familiar with Rutherford's style from his earlier writings, it is superfluous to mention the clarity and succinctness of his portion of the present book. Dr. Chadwick and Dr. Ellis are, however, to be congratulated in having caught something of the senior author's lucidity of expression. The result is a well-balanced discussion which the novice will find readable, and those working in the same field will find a mine of suggestive ideas and authoritative information.

ARTHUR H. COMPTON.

### Man's Remote Ancestry.

*The Origin of the Human Skeleton: an Introduction to Human Osteology.* By Dr. Robert Broom. Pp. 164. (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, 1930.) 10s. 6d. net.

WHEN, nearly forty years ago, Dr. Broom went to Australia to study the most primitive mammals now surviving, very little that was more than conjecture was known of the origin of mammals. As the result of his researches on the comparative anatomy of the Australian monotremes and marsupials and the examination of the rich harvest of fossils that has rewarded his thirty-four years of searching in South Africa, he has recovered so many links between the most primitive reptiles and mammals as to be justified in claiming, as he does in this book, that the essential problem of the origin of mammals is now definitely solved. Incidentally also, the question of the origin of lizards and crocodiles has been answered, and new light has been thrown upon the ancestry of dinosaurs and birds.

It is not surprising that the man who has contributed so largely to these great achievements, and himself recovered in the field most of the material which made them possible, should be able to write with freshness and originality, with a dis-

regard for traditional views and pedantry, on the subject of his lifework. In this small book, Dr. Broom gives a concise and wonderfully simple and convincing account of the information afforded by the comparative anatomy of the skeleton in vertebrates to demonstrate the line of evolution leading to reptiles, the derivation of mammals from one of the reptilian groups (Ictidosauria) at the close of the Triassic, and the origin of the Primates from a primitive Menotyphlous mammal before the end of the Cretaceous.

In the process of building up his argument, Dr. Broom examines in turn the comparative anatomy of the skull, the vertebræ and sternum, and the limbs, and thus incidentally has written in bold outline a most fascinating story of "the origin of the human skeleton", which is the descriptive label he has given his book. His wise selection, no less than his boldness and courage, eliminates most of the puzzling complexities of a difficult subject, and has enabled him to write with full mastery and lucidity a surprisingly easy and stimulating narrative. Whether or not this drastic re-interpretation of our knowledge will stand the test of critical analysis is, at the moment, of less importance than the consideration that a mass of new information is skilfully woven into the fabric of an easily comprehended hypothesis, which will provide the student with a clear-cut scheme wherewith to test the evidence, as well as the scheme itself, the brilliant hypothesis which Dr. Broom has constructed in tentative interpretation of the facts. This masterly synthesis is a conspicuous contribution to the study of the origin of mammals and of the evolution of man, which every student of human and comparative anatomy should assimilate.

G. ELLIOT SMITH.

### Gold Resources of the World.

*The Gold Resources of the World: an Inquiry made upon the Initiation of the Organising Committee of the XV International Geological Congress, South Africa, 1929.* With a Summary by A. C. Sutherland. Pp. xiv + 457 + 38 plates. (Pretoria: Wallach's, Ltd., 1930.) 25s.

IN 1929 the fifteenth International Geological Congress met in South Africa—synchronising as to time with the meeting of the British Association. The organising committee of the Congress had decided beforehand to initiate an inquiry into the gold resources of the world, as it was felt that such a subject was singularly appropriate. Previous congresses had dealt with the world's resources of



iron ore, coal, and pyrites, and these reports are still looked upon as standard works of reference. The Prime Minister of the Union, General Hertzog—who was honorary president of the Congress—issued a circular letter on Oct. 31, 1927, asking for the assistance and co-operation of those countries which have ever been known producers, and the reports are set out in this volume. There are also innumerable maps and useful statistical tables.

Let it be said that, on the whole, these reports are extraordinarily well done, and the names of their respective authors are a guarantee of accuracy, so far as this is possible. An introduction by Dr. A. L. Hall, a member of the staff of the Geological Survey of the Union, who acted as general secretary of the Congress, explains the scope of the work, and a most informative summary of the reports by Mr. A. C. Sutherland, formerly mine surveyor on the staff of the Union Government Mining Engineer, gives all the information which the casual reader would wish to have. So far as one can see, no country has been omitted, and although the same degree of accuracy, or rather approximation to accuracy, cannot be claimed for the gold resources report as for the previous three which have already been mentioned, it can be said that it is the best which can be done.

Gold has always been the premier precious metal. Mythology, the classics, and the Bible all teem with references to it, but never has it been talked about so much as to-day. True, the economists differ as to its utility, and one hears criticisms concerning its distribution, but all are agreed that it is the basis of the monetary system of most of the important countries of the world. It is also the yard-stick whereby wealth is measured and consequently the basis of credit. Yet, contrary to popular opinion, it is merely a commodity, subject like all others to ordinary economic laws, and when it costs a mine twenty-one shillings to recover gold from one ton of ore which contains only twenty shillingsworth of gold, the mine which has that ore must assuredly go out of business. Moreover, with all the searching during the centuries—and the search still continues—no other metal or commodity seems capable of taking its place.

No wonder, therefore, that there have been gold rushes in California, Australia, the Klondike, and in South Africa; and these will continue. True, we do not hear of them so much to-day, because our old world has been fairly well prospected during the past fifty years. But one would not expect to hear of a gold rush in Ireland, yet it is well known that there is plenty of alluvial gold in County

Wicklow, and there was a veritable rush there in 1795, when 800 oz. were recovered by peasants in six weeks. The summary already referred to shows that the British Empire is responsible for more than 70 per cent of the world's production, the Transvaal itself accounting for more than 50 per cent. Gold was first discovered in Bechuanaland by Carl Mauch in 1866; and since returns were made, the recorded value of the Transvaal output alone is now more than one thousand million pounds. The United States, which has long been out of the race for the premier position, is only a little way behind South Africa, and Australia comes next, with a total value of about six hundred millions.

Dr. Pirow, Government Mining Engineer to the Union of South Africa, on page 337 makes the following remarkable statement: "Since the year 1884, prior to which date no reliable figures are available, the Union of South Africa has produced a total of 229,051,118 fine ounces of gold, equivalent to 22.4 per cent of the total estimated world production to date, or 34 per cent of the production since the Union first entered the list of gold producers".

Though gold is widely distributed, the countries which have contributed substantially to the world's store in the past are comparatively few in number and some of them have ceased production altogether. Australia has fallen from its high position, but that is due entirely to political causes. When these are removed, it is possible that this great country may again become one of the principal producers.

The economist of the orthodox school will naturally be more interested in reserves rather than production, and this is possibly the weakest part of the reports. It has to be recognised, however, that these depend on economic considerations, and the zero line of payability is, therefore, never constant. It appears, however, that it is to the British Empire, and more particularly to South Africa, Canada, and to a lesser extent to Australia, that the world must look for its future supplies. In the Transvaal alone it is quite possible that gold to the value of one thousand million pounds may still be won—a stupendous total. There is no report from Panama, but that country's prospects as a producer appear to be good.

It remains to be said that the printers are the well-known South African firm of Wallach's, of Pretoria, which is the administrative capital of South Africa. But Pretoria is not a large city, and as the reports are printed in English, German, and French—the three official languages—and one in Italian, the production is indeed a remarkable tribute to their ability.

WM. CULLEN.



## Short Reviews.

*Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology: a Key for the Identification of Organisms of the Class Schizomycetes.* By David H. Bergey, assisted by a Committee of the Society of American Bacteriologists, Francis C. Harrison, Robert S. Breed, Bernard W. Hammer, Frank M. Huntoon, with an Index by Robert S. Breed. Third edition. Pp. xviii + 589. (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1930.) 27s. net.

THIS publication, which has now reached its third edition, is an extension and elaboration of the admirable and painstaking work of the Committee on Characterisation and Classification of the Society of American Bacteriologists (1917, 1920). When one considers the labour involved in a compilation of this nature, it would be agreeable if one could be persuaded that the value of the results obtained is commensurate with the effort expended. But even the most cursory examination of the pages of this manual suggest that too much is taken for granted in the published descriptions of various micro-organisms.

When, for example, one finds organisms of almost precisely the same morphological, cultural, and biochemical characters and of serological identity classified, not only under separate species but even under separate genera (*Pseudomonas fluorescens* and *Phytomonas* spp.; *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Phytomonas aptata*; *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* and *Shigella pfaffi*), one wonders where the authors' taxonomic conceptions may eventually lead us. The closely related species, *B. whitmori* and *B. mallei*, are, moreover, included in separate genera (*Flavobacterium* and *Pfeifferella* respectively), and the genus *Shigella*, in addition to *S. pfaffi* mentioned above, is made to include a rough variant of *Salmonella gallinarum* (*Shigella jeffersonii*). Turning to the genus *Salmonella* itself, one finds that practically no attention has been paid to the mass of brilliant and elaborate research made in recent years that has thrown so much light upon the complex serological relations of this extremely natural and self-contained group of bacteria.

A comprehensive and critical revision of the text would appear to be necessary when the next edition of this work is contemplated.

R. ST. J.-B.

*Textbook of Logic.* By Prof. A. Wolf. Pp. 407. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1930.) 10s. net.

THE best text-book on a special subject is not always written by the scholar with the greatest reputation in that subject. It is gratifying, therefore, that a logician of Prof. Wolf's measure should have written a text-book which can unhesitatingly be put in the first rank.

Logic in the past has too often erred on the side of mechanical formalism and remained to the student out of all relation to common sense and practical needs. In the author's own words, it has become "the recruiting place for the sadly depleted philosophy classes". Prof. Wolf, whose very posi-

tion at the London School of Economics keeps him in touch with most of the sociological and humanistic developments of the day, is emphatically alive to the practical needs of the student and scholar alike. His close contact with social science makes his treatment of logic fruitful in the application to modern types of argument, while the style is lucid and pleasant, and the treatment, in spite of its full dose of symbolism and technical instruction, distinctly attractive.

The exercises, given at the end of the book and therefore not impeding the continuity of the argument, will enable the student to apply the sound principle of the author that logic, no more than algebra or geometry, can be mastered by reading alone.

*Pioneers of Public Health: the Story of some Benefactors of the Human Race.* By M. E. M. Walker. Pp. xv + 270 + 23 plates. (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1930.) 12s. 6d. net.

THE pioneers whom Mrs. Walker has chosen to commemorate are the twenty-one eminent men whose names adorn the walls of the new building of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, a drawing of which forms the frontispiece. As Sir Humphry Rolleston points out in the foreword, twelve of the pioneers are British, four are from the United States, three from Central Europe, and two from France. Among the various departments of public health, epidemiology and State medicine are represented by Thomas Sydenham, Lemuel Shattuck, Sir Edwin Chadwick, William Farr, Sir John Simon, and Hermann Biggs; naval and military hygiene by James Lind, Sir John Pringle, and Edmund Alexander Parkes; preventive medicine by Johann Peter Frank, Edward Jenner, Max von Pettenkofer, Major Walter Reed, and General William Crawford Gorgas; bacteriology by Pasteur, Lister, and Koch; and protozoology by Surgeon-Major Timothy Richards, Lewis Alphonse Laveran, Sir Patrick Manson, and Sir William Leishman. A concise but sympathetic account of each pioneer is accompanied by his portrait and followed by a brief list of references.

*L'Esprit et ses maladies.* Par Marcel Nathan. (Bibliothèque générale illustrée, 15.) Pp. 80 + 60 planches. (Paris: Les Éditions Rieder, 1930.) 20 francs.

DR. NATHAN provides us with an excellent summary of the prevailing French attitude towards the mind and its diseases. He divides his small book up into three sections: the brain and the mind, the so-called organic psychoses, and the so-called functional psychoses. To include mania and melancholia as functional or non-organic conditions in the present state of our knowledge is scarcely justifiable. They are probably of metabolic origin. The best part of the book is the illustrations, some of which are actual photographs of patients, while others are reproductions of well-known pictures, by various Continental artists.



## The Beginnings of Science.\*

By Dr. CHARLES SINGER.

WHEN did science begin? Can any question be more fundamental for the history of rational thought? An adequate answer would doubtless demand the formulation of an exact and generally acceptable definition of science. No one, perhaps, has yet succeeded in accomplishing this seemingly simple task. But without insisting on a precise delimitation of the term 'science', we may get some way, at least, by taking its current if inexact sense. Thus we may treat science as simply the systematic *process* of recording natural happenings with the object of discerning some relation between them.

I would emphasise the word *process*. Science is often discussed as though it could be presented as a body of knowledge or doctrine, but reflection will soon reveal that this point of view cannot be maintained. For is it not the case that science that has ceased to develop soon ceases to be science at all? The science of one age is often the nonsense of the next. Think, for example, of judicial astrology, or of the doctrine of lucky and unlucky numbers. Who, if he did not know their history, would recognise these as the debris of finely conceived and far-reaching scientific hypotheses, which once attracted clear-thinking minds seeking for rational explanations of the world in which they lived? We may smile, if we will, at such an explanation of the face of the earth as the doctrine of successive disasters followed by successive creations. The view that fossils are the early and clumsier attempts of an omnipotent Creator may even move us to theological wrath. Yet such conceptions were but stages in the development of geological ideas, just as the scientific views of our own time are but a stage in a great secular process which will continue when we are no more.

It therefore behoves the historian of science to be very charitable, very forbearing, in all his judgments and presentations. He must not ask too much of previous ages, nor must he judge them by the standards of his own. He needs constantly to recall that he is dealing with work of erring and imperfect human beings, each of whom had, like himself, only a very partial view of truth. There is an unquenchable and irresistible tendency innate in the human mind to erect general laws or rules in explanation of the happenings of the world. That tendency is no less present in the historian of science than in the great minds whose work he records, and if he is to be judged at all by posterity, he can but echo the epitaph:

Reader, thou that passest by,  
As thou art so once was I;  
As I am, so shalt thou be,  
Wherefore, reader, pray for me.

Time, still, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its

sons away. It is the stream itself and the spirit that dwells therein that the historian of science has to study.

Science, then, is a process that can be followed through the ages; it is not a mere passive body of knowledge. The sheer validity and success of the scientific process, as applied in our own time in western Europe and America, has given rise to popular misunderstanding as to the nature of science, and some misapplication of such terms as 'science' and 'scientific'. We hear of the *science* of some prize-fighter, and a book has been published on the "Science of the Sacraments". There is nothing in the laws of this or any other country which forbids its citizens from giving the words of their language such significance as they may choose, but the word *science* as employed in these connotations has no clear link with the great progressive method of acquiring knowledge with which the historian of science has to deal. The very form of the adjective from science might itself give pause to those who would force the word to cover such topics as the skill of the prize-fighter or a knowledge of the theory and practice of religious rites. The word *scientific* means, derivationally, *knowledge making*, and no body of doctrine which is not being progressively *made* can for long retain scientific attributes.

During the last two generations the evolutionary conception of Nature has become so general that it now pervades our thoughts on every aspect of living activity, nor can we understand an organic product until we know how it came to be what it is. Now, the efforts of the human mind are essentially such products. It has thus become generally recognised that to comprehend, for example, the constitution of a State or the teaching of a religion it is absolutely necessary to know its past. This is the true reaction of evolutionary doctrine on the study of history.

On the study of science itself, however, this reaction of evolutionary doctrine has been less generally recognised. Why this should be is perhaps not altogether clear. One reason may be that the triumphant and absorbing successes of the application of the scientific method have deflected attention from the process itself. Another reason, which is perhaps but a restatement of the former, is that the very rapid growth of the products of the scientific process in quite modern times has turned men's thoughts away from its more ancient achievements. Yet it is clear that if we would understand the process itself, we must examine its application in the past and watch its action under conditions different from those in which we ourselves live. Only thus can we hope to attain any real insight into the nature of the process and of the effect it has had on man's estate throughout the ages.

Among the criticisms that can be made of any attempt to trace the history of science, there is one

\* Inaugural address delivered to the Second International Congress of the History of Science and Technology, by the president, on June 29, at the Royal Geographical Society.



that should be met at the outset. It has been said that the history of scientific activity presents a field so vast that it cannot be compassed at first hand by any single mind. The criticism is without validity. If pressed, it would not only prevent the writing of the history of science, but would also prevent the writing both of history and of science. Who, of his own knowledge, can compass the history of even a single country? Who, of his own knowledge, can deal with the animal kingdom, with the science of geometry, or with the structure of the earth? Yet this has not prevented, and should not prevent, the writing of histories of England and of Europe, of works on zoology, of treatises on mathematics, or of text-books of geology. The scope of such books in reference to the first-hand knowledge of their writers must be effectively infinite. The difficulty in writing them—as in reading them—is the difficulty in getting a philosophical grasp of the principles involved. In obtaining such grasp, first-hand knowledge is of primary importance. Yet this knowledge, applied in such a field, is but a means to an end, and the writer must be judged by his grasp of the principles he sets forth, rather than by the actual number of experiments he has made or experiences that he has undergone.

But to return to our question as to when science began. The question can as little be answered as the question, When does a man begin to grow old? "Before that I to be begun, I did begin to be undone." Anthropologists have detected germs of the scientific process in the lowest and rudest races of mankind. As soon as a child begins to observe, he begins to make generalisations. The savage sees the action of a living thing in the wind and the flow of the water. He generalises from his imperfect observation that movement means life. The baby calls every male "daddy"; his, too, is an elementary generalisation based on imperfect experience. Both ascriptions are imperfect attempts at deducing laws.

Here, however, we encounter a real gap in the historical narrative. We can see the scientific element in the baby's generalisation or in the savage's belief. Yet we cannot, with any confidence, trace them forward in a continuous stream to anything that we should call science in the current use of that term. How far, then, can we trace the matter the other way, ascending the stream of time? In this attempt the last decade has been particularly fruitful, and I shall venture to devote the remainder of my remarks to the special nature of this recent historical achievement. As is too often the case on the scientific front, the pioneers are more concerned with their own progress than with the relation of their advances to those of others. The onlooker truly sees most of the game, and perhaps it is not going too far to say that the game cannot be clearly seen except by the onlooker. This is the justification of the professed historian of science. Without him research in one department would rapidly lose touch with research in other departments. This is so with recent scientific history. Let us seek in the same

spirit among the records of a far earlier scientific history.

As we trace the records of science back into the mists that shroud the dawn of history, we see its varied disciplines dwindling to two, namely, to medicine and mathematics. So far as complete works are concerned, the earliest of all scientific treatises that have come down to us are in the medical class. They are contained in the miscellaneous group of tracts known as the "Hippocratic Collection".

The "Hippocratic Collection" takes its name from the alleged 'father of medicine'. In a less critical age this mass of writings was all ascribed to Hippocrates, and there are some who still find it difficult to abandon the old paths. Nevertheless, there is no evidence, worthy of the name, that any part of any of these works was written by Hippocrates, nor indeed is there any real evidence that Hippocrates wrote anything. It is, however, certain that some works in the "Hippocratic Collection" were composed in the fifth century B.C., at which period their eponymous author was born. Sections of some of them may well date back to the sixth, and portions of them even to the seventh century. Moreover, it has long been recognised that these medical writings were an integral part of a far wider and more deeply based contemporary rational movement in philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

It has indeed been argued that the relations between the medical and historical writings of ancient Greece are closely paralleled by the relations between the evolutionary and historical writings of a generation or two ago. We might put it that Hippocrates was to Thucydides as Darwin was to Buckle or Lecky. A good case for the comparison has been made recently by Prof. Cochrane of Toronto.<sup>2</sup>

However this may be, it is evident that behind these earliest surviving scientific monuments of the fifth, sixth, and seventh pre-Christian centuries there must be a scientific tradition that was already ancient when the Greek world was still young. Of this more ancient rational tradition the mathematical fragments have been more successfully pieced together than the medical.<sup>3</sup> Thus we have details of the achievements of the followers of Pythagoras, and perhaps of Pythagoras himself, whose life occupied the greater part of the sixth century. Moreover, Thales, the sage of Miletus, of whose scientific achievements there can be no doubt, takes us yet further back and into the seventh century. He takes us, too, beyond Greece, for his mother was a Phœnician. He himself had travelled in Egypt. Phœnicia suggests contact with Mesopotamia and the ancient Sumerian civilisation. Recent discoveries in that region, notably those that deal with the treatment of metals, suggest a command of natural forces which demanded theoretical scientific knowledge. Yet it is to Egypt that the Greeks commonly ascribed the origin of their medical and mathematical knowledge.

Among the Greeks before Thales and the seventh century, our view of the rational spirit grows very dim. In the "Works and Days" of Hesiod, written in



the eighth century B.C., we get some astronomical lore. Such knowledge, however, must have been common property in the Near East, and indeed in every early agricultural community. In the absence of an adequate calendar, some astronomical knowledge is necessary for the elementary operations in the field. Hesiod, it is true, has something rather beyond farmers' astronomy, but in him we have the independent scientific element at a well-nigh irreducible minimum.

Can we, then, trace the rational tradition among the Greeks behind Hesiod and the eighth century? I think we can. In the Iliad of Homer we obtain glimpses, distant, it is true, of an independent rational medical system. The Iliad tells of a great deal of fighting, in the course of which no less than 147 wounds are well described, and in many cases their treatment detailed. Now this treatment is always on entirely rational grounds, and magical elements are conspicuous by their absence. This and many other hints in the Iliad imply the practice of scientific medicine by recognised practitioners, without relation to folk-medicine. Thus, with the aid of the Iliad, we may trace the scientific tradition among the Greeks as far back as the ninth or tenth century. It is noteworthy that in the Odyssey the origin of medicines is ascribed to Egypt.

In view of the consensus among the Greeks as to their debt to Egypt, all traces of the scientific spirit revealed in the Egyptian papyri are of peculiar interest. Yet the finds have been, till recently, extraordinarily disappointing, and the contrast between Greek science and Egyptian science is greatly to the disadvantage of Egypt. For the inferiority of the Egyptian position as against the Greek, due weight has not always been given to differences in the records of the two civilisations.

First, we have to remember that the picture that we form of Greek thought is derived from the literary remains of the Greek people. That there have been irreparable losses to that literature is true, but the surviving part has come down to our time because it was read by the generations that came between the Greeks and ourselves, and it was read because, by each succeeding age, it was thought to be worth reading. Greek literature, as we have it, is thus, in essence, a selection. It is far otherwise with the Egyptian records. We have here merely what time has spared, and that old reaper has no more discretion with books than he has with the lives of men. He spares what he will and as he will. What kind of literature should we hope to recover from the wreck of our own civilisation? Daily journalism and trade advertisements occupy many times more bulk, and therefore would have a better chance of survival, than the works of the philosophers and men of science.

Secondly, the remnants that have come down to us from ancient Egypt have mostly been recovered from tombs. They were the kind of things that the men of their day thought suitable to bury with their dead. The commonest of all are, in fact, rolls of the "Book of the Dead". If we had to compare them with something in our own civilisation, they would perhaps correspond to the in-

scriptions on tombstones, to hymn-books, and to prayers for special occasions. It is true that we have an admixture of other documents, but the proportional distribution of surviving Egyptian writings bears no relation to the proportional distribution of Egyptian interests.

Thirdly, it must be remembered that much surviving Greek literature is from the most vital period of Greek history. On the other hand, the overwhelming mass of Egyptian papyri are from the New or Middle Kingdom, whereas the Old Kingdom was the day of Egyptian power. The later scribes were content with copying earlier material. These later scribes were, moreover, commonly careless and not uncommonly incompetent, and, as it falls out, this was especially the case for the papyri that bear on scientific topics.

Bearing in mind these contrasts in the circumstances of Egyptian and Greek documents, let us turn to the surviving papyri of scientific content. These, like the earliest Greek scientific material, divide naturally into the medical and the mathematical. A number of documents fall into each of the two categories, but most of them are so debased or so trivial that we miss little if we take only the principal specimens. Of these there are two in each class that are of primary importance. In the medical class there is the long known Ebers Papyrus and the recently described Edwin Smith Papyrus. In the mathematical class there is the Rhind Papyrus and the very recently described Moscow Papyrus. These four contain practically all that is known of Egyptian medicine—other than that of a purely magical character—and most that is known of Egyptian mathematics.

The Papyrus Ebers, known for seventy years, is still not completely intelligible. It presents many linguistic difficulties, chief among them being the names of drugs. It is of the New Kingdom, and is generally dated as of the sixteenth century B.C. It is in the main a collection of remedies for various named conditions which are sometimes briefly described. Its general intellectual level is about comparable to an English family receipt book of the seventeenth century, of which several have been published. There is no definite physiological, pathological, or pharmaceutical theory, but there is also little that one can call superstition. The book is taken up with a list of traditional treatments of a more or less disgusting character. That sections are taken from a much older work is evident from a few isolated paragraphs in it that are devoted to anatomy. These are so confused as to be unintelligible, but it is obvious that the scribe is trying to abstract an older and more scientific document.

During the last few months Prof. Breasted, of Chicago, has presented us with his edition of an Egyptian medical document of a somewhat different order.<sup>4</sup> The Edwin Smith Papyrus has had a romantic history, having been originally discovered about the same time, and perhaps in the same tomb, as the Ebers. A series of remarkable circumstances left it in private libraries and unknown to scholars until a few years ago.

In general form the Edwin Smith Papyrus is not



unlike the Ebers, in date somewhat similar or a little earlier, and its scribe no less careless and incompetent. He was, however, engaged in copying a document of greater scientific value, and probably of greater antiquity than that which was occupying the scribe of the Ebers Papyrus, for there can be little doubt that the original source of the Edwin Smith Papyrus was of the Old Empire. Moreover, the Edwin Smith Papyrus deals with surgical conditions, and especially injuries, while the Ebers is occupied with diseases. Injuries and their treatment lend themselves to clearer descriptions than do the diseases. We thus have in the Edwin Smith Papyrus a document of high value for comparison with certain works of the "Hippocratic Collection" of about twelve centuries later. Without discussion of details it may be said that through the mist of scribal ignorance and misunderstanding we can see in the Edwin Smith Papyrus an author who not only recorded actual case histories, but was seized at times of the spirit of science; that is to say, he records in order to learn something of the workings of the body as distinct from any attempt to treat his patient. Some of his observations, such as that injuries to the brain on one side result in paralysis of the other side of the body, are repeated in the "Hippocratic Collection", and do, in fact, throw light on the nature of physiological mechanism. The Edwin Smith Papyrus—or at least that part of it which survives—is devoted to injuries about the head. It gives us a glimpse—alas! that it should be so dim—of a lost and more ancient scientific literature to which such magnificent treatises as the "Wounds of the Head" and "Fractures and Dislocations" of the "Hippocratic Collection" may well have been related.

For Egyptian mathematics the most important document is the Rhind Papyrus, which was finely edited a few years ago by Prof. T. E. Peet, of Liverpool.<sup>5</sup> Its age is about that of the Edwin Smith Papyrus, though it is copied from an original of the nineteenth century B.C. It professes to be a 'guide for calculation'. Apart from simple rules for giving the areas of figures enclosed by right lines, we have the measure of a circle from which an estimate of  $\pi$  as 3.16 can be deduced, and a calculation with reference to the proportions of pyramids. In this last a certain relation which, as the Papyrus says, "makes the nature of the

figure", is deduced from the side of the square base and vertical height or *per-em-us* as the Papyrus calls it. The word *per-em-us* is doubtless the source of the Greek word *pyramis* and our *pyramid*. The problem clearly links up with the mathematical triumph of Thales in deducing the height of a pyramid from its shadow.

The last scientific document of Egyptian origin to be considered is the Moscow Papyrus, which was only published in full by Prof. Struve a few months ago.<sup>6</sup> It is of the Middle Kingdom and thus older than the others. It contains the determination of the volume of a truncated pyramid and the area of a hemisphere.<sup>7</sup> Both are correct, the latter on the basis of the Egyptian value for  $\pi$  as 3.16. It yet remains to be seen whether these determinations are based on general formulæ—as is believed to be the case by Prof. Struve—or whether they are empirically obtained. If the former, it will be necessary to rewrite the history of ancient science and with it much of ancient philosophy.

The rationalisation of the Greek intellect within a very few centuries has always appeared something of a miracle—an epiphany. On the other hand, an ancient and slowly disintegrating scientific tradition in Egypt or in the Near East would fit in well with what we know of the early history of Greek science. Whether such traditions existed is a question of fact which can only be solved by the Egyptologists or Assyriologists. In the meantime, the Rhind, the Edwin Smith, and the Moscow Papyri have made such a view less fantastic than would have appeared to be the case ten years ago.

<sup>1</sup> The more important works of the "Hippocratic Collection" are being edited by Mr. W. H. S. Jones and Dr. E. T. Withington for the Loeb Library. For a complete critical version we still depend on Emil Littré's "Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate" in 10 volumes (Paris, 1839-61).

<sup>2</sup> C. N. Cochrane, "Thucydides and the Science of History" (Oxford University Press, 1929).

<sup>3</sup> An excellent summary of Greek mathematics has recently been prepared by Sir T. L. Heath, "A Manual of Greek Mathematics" (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1931).

<sup>4</sup> J. H. Breasted, "The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus", 2 vols. (University of Chicago Press, 1931).

<sup>5</sup> T. E. Peet, "The Rhind Mathematical Papyrus" (Liverpool, 1923). Another edition was produced for the Mathematical Association of America, 1927-29, by A. B. Chace, L. S. Bull, and H. P. Manning, with a bibliography of Egyptian and Babylonian Mathematics by R. C. Archibald.

<sup>6</sup> W. W. Struve, "Mathematischer Papyrus des Staatlichen Museums der schönen Künsten in Moskau" (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik: Abt. A, Quellenband 1), Berlin, 1930.

<sup>7</sup> The Moscow Papyrus is discussed by Battiscombe Gunn and T. Eric Peet, "Four Geometrical Problems from the Moscow Mathematical Papyrus", *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 15, p. 167, Nov. 1929; and Kurt Vogel, "The Truncated Pyramid in Egyptian Mathematics", *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 16, p. 242, Nov. 1930. The work of Struve is critically reviewed by T. E. Peet in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 17, p. 154, May 1931.

### Population Problems.

THE second general assembly of the International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems met in the rooms of the Royal Society of Arts on Monday, June 15, the chair being taken by the president, Prof. Raymond Pearl. Delegates of ten nationalities were present.

During the opening session the president reviewed the work of the Union during the three years of its existence, and claimed, with reason, that the progress made could be regarded as gratifying. Fourteen countries already have National Com-

mittees, which function with varying degrees of intensity, whilst in still other countries (Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland) National Committees are in process of organisation. There are three International Research Commissions receiving funds from the Union and dealing respectively with population and food supply, differential fertility, and the vital statistics of primitive races. In addition, grants have been made to many individuals for investigations which fall outside the scope of these Commissions. Sixty-four per cent



of all moneys expended is allocated to research. Nine numbers of the official bulletin have been published.

Election of officers took place, and Sir Charles Close succeeds Prof. Raymond Pearl as president of the Union.

During the morning sessions of the following three days, various modifications of the statutes and regulations shown to be desirable by the experience gained during the past three years were made. The afternoon sessions were devoted to the reading of scientific papers.

Prof. J. D. Black, chairman of the commission dealing with population and food supply, outlined a scheme which had been prepared to serve as a basis for the making of an inventory of the work already done on this particular subject and as a guide in the planning of future research. Prof. Jens Warming, of Copenhagen, discussed the trends in agricultural production in Denmark. In his country the increase of the harvest is greater than the growth of population, and if there should be a shortage of one kind or source of food (for example, grain, as was the case during the War) it is a relatively simple matter to adjust this by curtailing the amounts used for animal fodder.

Prof. P. K. Whelpton, of the Scripps Foundation, said that population increase was declining rapidly in the United States, being 9 per cent in 1930 as against 18 per cent in 1920. Consequently, the age composition had changed considerably in the last decade. The number of children under five has actually declined, while the number of persons over fifty has increased about 25 per cent. This slower growth and trend toward a nation of elders should have marked effects on economic, social, and political life, checking expansion and making for greater conservatism.

Prof. A. L. Bowley, of the London School of Economics, dealt with some economic aspects of the tendency of population in Great Britain. He showed that during the past twenty years wages have increased, especially so in the case of town labourers; so much so that in 1929 such a man in regular work had a wage sufficient to provide the bare necessities for a family of four children under fourteen years of age. Poverty in urban districts is due, not to low wages, but to illness, age, unemployment, incapability, death, or absence of the natural bread-winner. During the same period there has been a progressive change in the constitution of the family. The falling birth-rate since 1914 has resulted in a decrease in the number of child-bearing women, a fall in the number of children, and an increase in the number of old people. With the rise of the real wage and the reduction in the number of children per family, future generations will live in an environment progressively more and more favourable for satisfactory development. Smaller families mean better housing conditions and less competition for employment.

Dr. Karl Edin, of Stockholm, reported further on his study of differential fertility among the social classes. His figures show that in this city fertility tends to rise and not to fall with increase

in income. Furthermore, sterility is greater amongst the poor couples. Prof. Eugen Fischer, of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Anthropologie, reported on Dr. Muckermann's studies on differential fertility of the agricultural workers and university teachers in Germany. The conclusion to be derived from this study is that a social group, selected on the basis of intellectual achievement, is incapable of maintaining its numbers. Dr. L. I. Dublin, of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of New York, read a paper on the outlook for the American birth-rate. He concludes that the decline of the birth-rate is universal, and results primarily from voluntary control of conception and not from reduced fertility. He assumes that the population of the United States will become stationary in the course of the next generation or two with a birth-rate of 14.28 per thousand, and that, having reached this stationary stage, it will then proceed to decline at a rate that will reduce it to one-half in 300 years, in 161 years, in 108 years, or in 80 years, according to whether or not certain variables operate.

Prof. C. B. Fawcett dealt with some factors of population density. He estimates that the total habitable land area of the world is about 50,000,000 square miles and the approximate population of the world about 2000 million. The mean density of population over all the inhabited land of the world is therefore about forty persons per square mile. The actual distribution of population over the land varies from 680 per square mile in Belgium to 2.2 in Australia. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to enumerate all the factors causing this wide variation in local densities, but amongst the most important are the following—natural resources of the land, mineral wealth and power, geographical location. Developments in modern transport have led to a readjustment of the balance between local fertility and density of population. Products gained locally are, in the great majority of cases, not used locally, but serve to maintain the population of distant regions; and therefore the age-old tendency for density of population to increase in proportion to fertility of the land has lost much of its strength. In some countries we even find that increase in food production locally is accompanied by a decrease in the agricultural and rural population. There is no indication that the fertile regions of the New World are likely to become the home of densely crowded peasant populations comparable to those of China. Prof. Fawcett argued that in Britain the Poor Laws during the last century and the Unemployment Insurance to-day both have had the unforeseen and undesirable result of restricting freedom in the matter of internal migration. The growth of the town-planning movement and of the consciousness of the need of a well-considered country-planning in many lands indicates the likelihood of a far greater governmental interference in the future.

Prof. J. W. Gregory spoke on some effects of current migration restrictions. During recent years there has been an almost complete suppression of immigration on the part of those countries



which formerly received the bulk of European emigrants. One effect of such restriction in the United States is labour shortage, resulting in an increased internal migration of negroes and Mexicans. Higher wages and improved hygienic and social conditions tend to increase the duration of life and reduce the infantile mortality of the negro, and this, with the absence of European immigration, must raise the proportion of negroes in the population. This view was not accepted by several of the American delegates, one of whom instanced the fact that birth control clinics were now being opened and considerably used by the negro population of the Harlem district of New York.

Dr. G. W. Kosmak dealt with the position of the obstetrician in relation to certain aspects of the population problem. He expressed the opinion that certain developments in the practice of obstetrics at the present time may have a not inconsiderable effect in reducing the birth-rate; for example, the increase in operative deliveries, which result in a higher mortality, and at the same time undoubtedly produce increased sterility through infection. He pointed out that the dread of maternal mortality played its part in the encouragement of women to have recourse to birth control.

In a paper on the future of the Belgian population, Prof. Baudhuin, of the University of Louvain, concludes that the population is now approaching its maximum, which it will attain about 1940, when it will number 8,110,000; and that after this there will be a gradual decline, so that in the year 2000 it will be only 5,760,000.

Further interesting papers on this subject were presented by Mr. Lotka, Dr. Wicksell, and others,

and, in the concluding sessions, papers dealing with the broader biological aspects of the population problem were presented by Mr. Elton, who dealt with the cyclical variation in the numbers of lemming, Arctic fox, and field mouse population, and by Mr. J. A. Fraser Roberts, who discussed the significance of the results of mass selection in the improvement of the breeds of domesticated animals.

The function of the Union is to discuss such matters as the above dispassionately and scientifically, and it is doing its best to carry out this duty, though somewhat hampered by want of funds. Much of the money which has hitherto been spent on the work of the Union has been presented by generous individuals and institutions in America; it is the turn of other countries to follow such a good example, especially as an excellent opportunity now offers itself. The chairman of the American National Committee, Dr. Louis I. Dublin, informed the general assembly that certain sources in the United States would be prepared to pay to the Union the sum of 5000 dollars a year, for three years, on the condition that a similar total sum was presented to the Union by individuals, or institutions, in other countries. This offer was gratefully accepted by the general assembly. Will not those who are interested help by their subscriptions to make this generous offer available? Subscriptions may be sent to the General Secretary, International Population Union, 46 Catherine Street, Westminster.

Prof. Eugen Fischer extended an invitation, which was unanimously accepted, to the Union to hold its third general assembly in Germany in 1934.

### Obituary.

MR. W. F. DENNING.

AS announced in NATURE for June 20, the veteran astronomer, Mr. William Frederic Denning, died at Bristol, mainly as the effect of the weakness of age, on June 9 last.

Mr. Denning was world-famous, having a reputation based on careful and assiduous use of the telescope, but known more especially for his naked-eye observation of the flight of meteors and his deduction from them of radiant points that form a large part of contemporary knowledge of this byway of science.

Denning was born on Nov. 25, 1848, at Redpost, near Radstock, in Somerset. When quite a boy the aspect of the night sky had an attraction for him, and at the age of seventeen he became possessed of a 4½-inch refracting telescope, which was followed in 1871 by a 10-inch reflector, with which his more important observations were made. At the period when Denning began his astronomical career, the medium for publications relating to the science was the *Astronomical Register*, a monthly periodical started in 1863, in which astronomers made public their views and observations; and to this Denning began to contribute in 1868, his earliest communications being on the

surface of Jupiter and the appearance of its satellites, and others on the visibility of Mercury with the naked eye, which was a subject to which he gave much attention throughout his life. A letter in the issue of December 1868 on his observation of the Leonid meteors of that year is interesting as foreshadowing the main work of his life. In 1869 an organisation known as the Observing Astronomical Society was formed under the auspices of the *Register*, which numbered more than forty active members in its second year, and of this Denning was secretary and treasurer. The pages of the periodical show how well he fulfilled the duties of his office during the few years of the existence of the Society. He was president of the Liverpool Astronomical Society in 1887-88.

Denning did not become a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society until June 1877, but he contributed several short papers to the *Monthly Notices* before that date, with Mr. Proctor, Mr. Main, or some other as sponsor—among these being notes on the visibility of Mercury as a naked-eye object in the twilight, and of the possibility of seeing Jupiter and Venus in sunshine, which he said he was frequently able to do. The majority of them, however, were records of his observation of luminous



meteors, and one communicated in April 1876 is specially to be noted, for it was a determination of twenty-seven radiant points that he had determined from his own observations, and was the first of a series of such papers that he contributed during his career. Reference is made in it to similar lists of radiant points by Greg, Tupman, Herschel (Alexander), and to a committee of the British Association on luminous meteors that had published full reports for several years past—for there were many workers in this field at the time, and Schiaparelli had already put forward his views on the relation between meteor-streams and cometary orbits. It is clear that at the beginning of the nineteenth century shooting stars were considered to be of electrical origin, though aerolites found on the earth were recognised as having come from without. It was not until about 1834 that the significance of meteor radiation was recognised as indicating direction in space, and hence later came the further conclusion that meteors move in orbits around the sun.

Denning evidently determined to associate himself with the band of workers in this new branch of science, and to take his full share in the arduous duty of observing. He has described his plan of working in his paper of May 1890, this being a catalogue of 918 radiant points of shooting stars observed at Bristol:

"All the observations were made in the open air and from the garden adjoining the house. Attention was almost invariably given to the eastern sky. In mild weather I sat in a chair with the back inclined at a suitable angle; but on cold frosty nights I found it convenient to maintain a standing posture, and sometimes to pace to and fro, always however keeping the eyes directed towards the firmament in quest of meteors."

Denning's papers on meteors were many, and touch the subject at many points. Bare mention can only be made here of stationary radiants, a difficult subject depending largely on his observations as data. Almost the last of these papers was one in November 1923, which is a catalogue of 314 radiants from observations made at Bristol between the years 1912 and 1922, and, with those in three previous lists of which this is a continuation, brings the total of radiant points determined by him to nearly 1500. The number of meteors observed by him in the years specified was 6220, and of these the flights of 4008 were recorded. This paper contains some notes embodying items from his experience or his views on various meteoric subjects that make it valuable. A General Catalogue of more than 4000 radiant points determined by himself and others, compiled by him, is to be found in vol. 53 of the *Memoirs of the Royal Astronomical Society*.

Besides the large amount of naked-eye observing here indicated, Denning found time to use his telescope, and in this respect his success was noteworthy. The search for comets is a task requiring assiduity and patience, and he was rewarded for efforts of this kind by the discovery of five. His first was on October 4, 1881, and the comet then

discovered, after being further observed by himself and others, was believed to be periodic, but was, however, not seen afterwards. Comets discovered by him in 1890, 1891, and 1892 were not periodic, whereas for the fifth, discovered in 1894, a period of 7.3 years was computed. Many nebulae not previously known were found by him in the course of his search for comets, and the Nova in Cygnus of August 1920 is credited to him as its first observer.

It is difficult to summarise or comment on Denning's observations of Jupiter and the other planets, but they comprise many determinations of rotation period of the giant planet from observation of various spots. He gave to the world his knowledge so gained in a book, "Telescopic Work for Starlight Evenings", published in 1890; and a brochure on the planets Mercury and Venus, a reprint of chapters contributed to the *Observatory* magazine, is a valuable summary of experience. In 1895 the Valz prize of the Paris Academy was awarded to him for his meteoric work, and in 1898 Denning was the recipient of the gold medal of the Royal Astronomical Society, the grounds for the award being his meteoric observations, his cometary discoveries, and other astronomical work. He received the degree of M.Sc. from the University of Bristol in 1927 *honoris causa*. In the year 1904 he was granted a Civil List pension of £150 a year for his services to science, for he followed no profession. In his youth he had worked with his father, who was Borough Accountant of Bristol, and it is somewhat unexpected to learn that at that time he was a cricketer of skill and reputation, and that he might have been included in the eleven representing his famous county. But he preferred a secluded life that he could devote to astronomy. Though not inclined to make friends personally, he had a large list of correspondents, whom he was always ready to help with advice, and one passes from among us who lived solely for the acquisition of abstract knowledge, for which he endured much self-sacrifice and sought no personal reward.

H. P. H.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. Solon Irving Bailey, emeritus professor of astronomy in Harvard University, on June 5, aged seventy-six years.

Prof. Friedrich Becke, formerly general secretary of the Vienna Academy of Sciences, on June 18, aged seventy-six years.

Sir Hugh Bell, Bart., chairman of the council of Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and past-president of the Iron and Steel Institute, who occupied a prominent place in the industrial life of the north of England, on June 29, aged eighty-seven years.

Mr. E. W. Blair, senior scientific officer of the Royal Naval Cordite Factory, Holton Heath, who was killed in the explosion at the factory on June 23.

Dr. T. F. Chipp, assistant director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, on June 28.



## News and Views.

IN our Supplement of this week will be found the main part of Sir Richard Glazebrook's Guthrie lecture to the Physical Society of London. The lecture was founded to perpetuate the name of Frederick Guthrie, the physicist through whose action in 1873 the Society was formed. Born in Bayswater in 1833, Guthrie studied chemistry under Graham and Williamson at University College, London, and also under Bunsen at Heidelberg and Kolbe at Marburg. Returning to England, he held posts at Owens College, Manchester, and the University of Edinburgh, and from 1861 until 1867 was professor of chemistry and physics in the Royal College, Mauritius, where he had as a colleague Walter Besant, the novelist. In 1869 he became a lecturer in physics at the Royal School of Mines and the Normal School of Science, South Kensington, and this post he held until his death on Oct. 21, 1886. John Hall Gladstone (1827-1902) became the first president of the new society, and Guthrie occupied that position in 1884. Unlike Guthrie, who was a chemist first and a physicist afterwards, Sir Richard Glazebrook has devoted all his life to physics. Born in 1854, after graduating at Cambridge he became one of the first demonstrators under Maxwell in the Cavendish Laboratory, and held other posts in the University. His main work has been done in the National Physical Laboratory, of which he became the first director in 1899. During his period of office, which lasted twenty years, he saw the staff increase from three persons to more than five hundred, and under him the Laboratory came to fulfil its object, "to make the forces of science available to the nation".

To Sir Richard Glazebrook the subject of standards has been a lifelong study, and his Guthrie lecture is a valuable and authoritative review of the ancient standards, the connexion between ancient and modern standards, and the scientific methods by which the latter are examined, compared, and reproduced. As in so many other matters, the first application of science to the question of the weights and measures of Great Britain was due to the Royal Society, while the replacement of the old French measures by the metric system was due to members of the Paris Academy of Sciences. Graham, Bird, Troughton, Kater, Baily, Sheepshanks, and Miller were among those who introduced accuracy into British standards, while the history of the metric system is connected with such famous names as those of Lagrange, Laplace, Borda, and Condorcet. Not the least interesting part of Sir Richard's lecture is that dealing with the modern methods of basing standards on the length of the seconds pendulum, the quadrant of the earth, or the wave-length of light.

THE annual inspection of the National Physical Laboratory by the general board, on June 23, was made this year the occasion for the official opening of the new physics building by the president of the Royal Society, Sir Gowland Hopkins. Sir Richard Glazebrook, the first director of the Laboratory, and

Sir J. J. Thomson, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and chairman of the research committee of the Laboratory, also took part in the ceremony. In the course of a brief sketch of the history of the laboratory since its formal opening in Bushy House in 1902 by the then Prince of Wales, Sir Richard Glazebrook referred to the early difficulties of the Royal Society in finding a suitable site for the laboratory. Sir Richard traced the development of the laboratory during the time that he was director and later, when he was succeeded by Sir Joseph Petavel; and he contrasted the space allotted to physics in the early days with that now necessary to meet the requirements of the physics department. A warm tribute was paid to the interest and insight of the many eminent men of science and engineers who have made possible the continued development of the laboratory.

SIR J. J. THOMSON in a brief speech pointed out that the choice of the Bushy Park site has been more than justified, on account of the tremendous expansion which has taken place since the laboratory was first formed. Sir Joseph referred to the place of the laboratory in the general development of pure and applied science, and to its relation to university and industrial laboratories. At the conclusion of the addresses, the new building was formally declared open by Sir Gowland Hopkins, and those present were afforded an opportunity of inspecting it. The design for the new building was prepared by Mr. F. A. Llewellyn, of H.M. Office of Works. The proposed building has a frontage of 295 feet with wings of 135 feet in length, forming three sides of a rectangle. The central portion only, with a frontage of 180 feet, has been erected at present, and will be used to accommodate the heat and general physics section of the physics department, with part of the radiology and sound divisions.

ON June 24, H.M. the Queen opened the Tuke Building at Bedford College for Women (University of London). The new building, the foundation-stone of which was laid by H.R.H. Princess Mary, completes a quadrangle and is dignified and stately, if rather severe in outline. The total cost of the building will probably exceed £110,000, of which a little more than three-quarters has been raised by grants and donations. Among its features are a fine lecture hall capable of seating the entire student body of the College, new laboratories for physical and inorganic chemistry, experimental psychology, and physics, besides accommodation for other departments, including philosophy and mathematics. Perhaps the most attractive feature of the new extension, for those interested in science, is the astronomical observatory, containing a seven-inch refracting equatorial by Grubb, generously presented by the Woolwich Arsenal Institution. The Department of Psychology occupies the first floor of one wing and comprises a lecture room and laboratories. The latter are well equipped with modern recording apparatus and material for studying the



special senses. A pendulum tachistoscope is built into one of the walls. There is also a kodascope for the projection of films in the study of evidence and report. Special features of the new chemical laboratories are the replacement of gas heating by electrical devices—we hope that the bunsen burner, that symbol of the nineteenth century laboratory, has not vanished completely—and the arrangements for lighting and ventilation. The name of the new building commemorates the long principalship (1907–29) of Miss Margaret Tuke, who contributed so much to the success and present position of the College.

THE Repton School Science Society was founded in 1866 and has had an almost unbroken existence since that date. Among the original members of the Society are numbered Prof. F. O. Bower and Sir Martin Conway, M.P., and the records of the earliest meetings are interesting in that they show that the subjects discussed have now become part of the routine science teaching in the school. The Society held a conversation at Speech Day, June 26 and 27, which consisted of short lectures, demonstrations, and exhibits in physics, chemistry, and biology. The physics section included, among other things, a lecture on X-rays, in which members of the audience were 'screened' to show the heart beating and the bones of the arm; there was also a lecture on the electrical gramophone, illustrated by records kindly lent by the Bell Telephone Laboratories, New York. The demonstrations included the principle of the Radiovisor burglary alarm, and a model to show the effect of coal dust on explosions in mines. There were lectures on dyes and liquid air in the chemistry section, and among the demonstrations were a set of experiments to illustrate bleaching and a group of experiments on electroplating. A notable feature of this section was a model of a petroleum refinery, lent by the British Petroleum Company. The biology section contained numerous dissections and exhibits, a micro-film of simple unicellular organisms actually taken by members of the Society, and a demonstration of blood circulating in the tail of an anaesthetised tadpole. Living chick embryos in various stages of development were also shown.

NINETY-FIVE heads and skulls of Asiatic and American ungulates and carnivores have been selected for the British Museum (Natural History) from the collection of the late C. St. George Littledale, and form the most important addition to the collection of Asiatic ungulates since the Hume bequest came to the Museum in 1912. The Zoological Department of the Museum has purchased a specimen of the pigmy hippopotamus from the French Ivory Coast. This animal is confined to a comparatively small area of West Africa, and does not seem to extend into the great forest zone of the Congo. The New York Zoological Society has presented to the Museum a skeleton of the extinct giant tortoise of Charles Island, Galapagos. In 1832 the island was colonised, and within a short time the animals were exterminated. There was considerable doubt as to the exact species until a large number of complete skeletons, of which

the present specimen is one, was discovered in a cave by Dr. C. H. Townsend in 1928. The collections brought home by Mr. Bertram Thomas from the Rub'al Khali, Arabia, are now being worked out, and a selection has been placed on exhibition in the Central Hall of the Museum. The mammals include two foxes of interest, an Arabian race of the common fox, and a fennec fox. The reptiles of the desert region are chiefly Asiatic in their relationships, whereas the affinities of those of the Qara Mountain region are with the reptiles of East and North-East Africa. The insects demonstrate very clearly the strong affinity existing between the fauna of southern Arabia and Africa. Many species have not been observed hitherto outside Africa; there is also a marked Mediterranean element. Recent acquisitions in the Mineral Department include two small diamonds, the first found in Sierra Leone; a piece of an unusual type of stony meteorite which was seen to fall on Nov. 25, 1930, at Karoonda, South Australia (see NATURE, Mar. 14 and April 25); and a mass of meteoric iron weighing 125 lb., found in 1922 at Piedade do Bagre, Minas Geraes, Brazil, which is a single crystal individual.

IN an interesting letter to the *Times* for June 16, the Rev. J. P. Rowland, *S.J.*, has estimated the position of the epicentre of the North Sea earthquake of June 7. From the times of the first and second phases on the Kew and Stonyhurst records, he finds the time at the origin to be 0 h. 25 m. 12 s. G.M.T. From this and the time of arrival at six British observatories, the distances of the origin from the various observatories were calculated and arcs of circles were drawn on the map with the stations and distances as centres and radii. The point in which the arcs for Kew and Stonyhurst intersect is adopted as the epicentre, namely, 53° 43' 8" N., 0° 53' 2" E. The arcs from the other stations, with the exception of Oxford, form a small triangle at distances of not more than two miles from this point. According to the *Daily Science News Bulletin* (June 8), issued by Science Service, Washington, D.C., the earthquake had but little effect on the seismographs in the United States. It was recorded at Washington and rather indefinitely at Georgetown University.

CONTINUOUS daily records of the hours of bright sunshine have been made by many of the meteorological stations in all parts of the world for many years, and these records have proved useful in various lines of scientific research. In one of the usual methods, a record is burned on a card by the solar rays concentrated by a glass sphere. Provided the instructions given with the instrument are carefully followed, this method gives fair results. Difficulties arise in interpreting the results on a day when the sun has been intermittently obscured by numerous small but dense cumulus clouds. The burned spots have to be considered collectively, and the estimate made of the total hours is only a rough approximation. In the *Canadian Journal of Research* for March 1931, Wallace A. Thomson describes a method of recording the bright sunshine by means of a photoelectric cell



and an electric clock. When light of a definite intensity falls upon the photoelectric cell, the electric clock is automatically started by the action of a relay. This relay also stops the clock just as promptly when the sun disappears behind a cloud or below the horizon. It is thus only necessary to read the time on the clock at the end of each day, when the number of hours it has been running since it was last observed gives the number of hours of sunshine during that period of time. Comparative records are given of the hours of bright sunshine observed during a week at Manitoba Agricultural College by the author's cell and clock, by two types of sunshine recorder, and by personal observations by the author. It was found that the photo-cell and clock method never omitted any portion of the daily record that would not be considered questionable. On several days, the clock continued to operate until only half the sun was visible above the horizon. The other methods sometimes omitted about two hours of the record.

STRIKING progress continues to be made by the recently formed industry for canning English-grown fruits and vegetables. During the last two years, the number of firms in operation has risen from five to nearly forty, and the output has increased fourfold since 1928. The application of the National Mark Scheme in 1930 considerably stimulated the demand for English canned products, and although during this first season the scheme was applied to some half-dozen fruits and vegetables only, yet more than fifty per cent of the total output (which equalled the total imports of canned fruits other than pineapples from the rest of the Empire) was packed under the mark. Further, the high standard of quality required was well maintained. Encouraged by this success, the Ministry of Agriculture states in a recent weekly news-sheet that it is now extending the scheme to a much larger number of fruits and vegetables. Careful attention is also being paid to standardisation, particularly as regards sizes of cans, weight of fruit, and strength of syrup. Four sizes of cans will be put on the market, and two different strengths of syrup will be available. Lacquered cans, although already widely employed, will be required for red and blue fruits and for peas and beans sold under the National Mark Scheme. A large market for English canned produce is available in the Empire, particularly in South and East Africa and in India, several consignments having already been dispatched, but careful co-operation between the fruit and vegetable growers and the canner is necessary, if full advantage is to be taken of this rapidly expanding market.

THE most striking feature of the National electricity scheme in Great Britain is the grid, the common distribution mains of all the selected power stations. This makes necessary the standardisation of all systems of supply, and to effect this many difficulties have to be overcome. The principal difficulty is the standardisation of the frequency of the alternating current supplied by the various companies. The cost of this work was not over-estimated when it was put at eighteen million pounds, but it is defrayed by the Central Electricity

Board in the first instance and will afterwards be recovered by a levy on the whole of the electricity supply undertakings in the country. There are three main areas affected. In central Scotland the Glasgow Corporation and the Clyde Valley Co. are changing over from 25 cycles to 50 cycles. A similar change is being made in Birmingham. The operation has to be done gradually, as provision must be made for the continued use of consumers' machinery during the change. The most difficult problem of all is the conversion of the north-east England scheme, where the greater part of an area of over five thousand square miles is supplied at a frequency of 40.8 cycles per second. A change of frequency affects every piece of rotating apparatus, from the power house to the smallest domestic motor. All electromagnetic devices are more or less affected. In making new installations it is necessary to erect machines which can work at dual frequency or, at least, which can readily be converted from one to the other. As the Electricity Board points out, this change gives an opportunity to many important industrial works of economically modernising and re-equipping their electrical machinery. Many ways of doing this are described in the *English Electric Journal* for June.

THE keen competition that is taking place for overseas traffic makes it necessary for marine engineers to keep abreast of the latest engineering developments. The expenditure of several millions on a new liner is only justified if it remain an efficient unit for at least twenty years. Too slavish an adherence to the policy of 'safety first' may lead to it being outclassed by a competing vessel. In the *Electrical Times* for June 4, A. D. Constable discusses fairly fully the case for the use of electric propulsion in a large high-speed liner. A detailed scheme is worked out, and he advocates notable innovations in marine engineering practice. At first sight a direct mechanical drive between the turbines and the propeller shaft seems more desirable than to install electric generators and motors between them, especially as the transmission losses in the case of large liners are about six per cent less for the mechanical drive. The cost of the electrical machinery is also the greater. On the other hand, the great flexibility of the electric drive, the possibility of using five propeller shafts and twin rudders, the economical working at all speeds, and the great convenience of having all the auxiliary services on board ship worked electrically, in many cases indicate that the all-electric ship is the more economical. Provided that every electrical machine and device is of the best materials and design and in accordance with the most modern specifications, the ship should run in all weathers with freedom from trouble and anxiety, and with an economy hitherto not reached in marine work. If in addition higher steam pressures were used in the boilers, a very appreciable reduction might be made in the excessive amount of space now occupied by the boilers.

THE annual report of the Director of the Imperial Institute, Lieut.-Gen. Sir William Furse, shows

(Continued on p. 29.)



# Supplement to NATURE

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## Standards of Measurement: Their History and Development.\*

By SIR RICHARD GLAZEBROOK, K.C.B., F.R.S.

### ANCIENT STANDARDS OF LENGTH.

WHEN man became a measuring animal, he naturally took as his standards the parts of his own body. The cubit, the length of the forearm from the elbow joint to the tip of the middle finger, was his unit of measurement; the Egyptian hieroglyph for a cubit is a figure of the arm, and this unit was divided into spans, palms, digits, etc. There were various cubits, differing somewhat in length, and our knowledge of them has come to us in the main from Egyptian monuments. It appears probable, however, that the Egyptians obtained their cubit originally from Chaldæa, and one of the oldest standards we know of is to be found in the Louvre, where there is a bust of Gudea, a Sumerian king of about 2300 B.C. On it there is engraved a scale showing sixteen digits of the Sumerian cubit, which was divided into thirty digits.

The cubit from which it appears probable that our foot and inch have descended is generally known as the Olympic cubit, because it passed from Egypt into Greece. It was, as we shall see shortly, about 18·24 in. long and was divided into two spans, the stretch from the thumb to the little finger, of about 9 in. A span was equal to three palms, the breadth of four fingers, each being about 3 in. in length, and the palm was divided into four digits, each  $\frac{3}{4}$  in., or more accurately 0·76 in. There was also the fathom of 4 cubits, 72·96 in. or 6·08 ft., the outstretch of the two arms.

At a somewhat later date another unit, the foot, equal to two-thirds of a cubit, was introduced, and

this was divided into twelve thumb-nail breadths—Gk. *δρῦξ*—whence came the terms uncia, ounce, inch, used for the twelfth part of the troy pound and of the foot.

I have not heard of an existing specimen of an Olympic cubit, but we can determine its length in the following manner. Herodotus tells us that “the Egyptian cubit is equal to that of Samos”, that is, the cubit used in Greece, and we can obtain the length of this from the measurement of various Greek temples. The Hecatompèdon of the Parthenon is a square of 100 ft. in side. This was measured in 1846 by F. C. Penrose, who gave as the length of the Greek foot 12·1610 in.; whence the cubit, being  $\frac{3}{2}$  feet, is 18·2415 in.; this was corrected later to 18·2405 in., or (say) 18·24 in.

There is another link to be obtained thus. The side of the Great Pyramid is stated to be 500 cubits in length. This has been frequently measured. Sir Henry Lyons informs me that the result obtained a few years since by Mr. J. H. Cole, of the Egyptian Survey, was 230·364 metres or 755·76 ft. Earlier measures give much the same result. Sir Flinders Petrie found the average length to be 9068·8 inches or 755·7 ft., giving for the length of the cubit, if we accept the statement that a side of the base of the Pyramid measured 500 cubits, the value of 18·14 in. This is nearly the same as the 18·24 inches found from the Greek temple, and we may perhaps accept this value as close to the truth. This foot with its division into twelve thumb-breadths (*δρῦξ*) became the Greek foot.

In due course, the foot passed to Rome, becoming somewhat altered in value; the Roman mile of 5000 Roman feet is generally said to be equal to 8 Greek stadia, each of 600 ft. or 400 cubits, so that the Roman foot was equal to  $\frac{24}{25}$  of the Greek foot, or 11·67 English inches. This makes the Roman foot equal to 0·973 English feet. Direct measurement by Martin Folkes and others give as

\* From the Guthrie Lecture for 1931, delivered before the Physical Society of London on May 15. I wish to express my indebtedness to many friends, and first and foremost to Sir Henry Lyons, for most of the historical apparatus shown during the lecture, to the Deputy Warden of the Standards for apparatus in his charge, then to the Director of the National Physical Laboratory and Messrs. Sears and Dye for their valued help, and to Mr. Christelow for his care in preparing the slides. For the part relating to ancient standards, thanks are due to Col. N. Belalaw, C.B., to Mr. Sidney Smith, of the British Museum, and to the library staff of the Royal Society, who helped in looking up the references; while I am indebted to Mr. Hope Jones, of the Synchronome Co., and to Mr. Shreeve, representing the Bell Telephone Co., for information as to time measurements.



the value 0.967 English feet, or putting it the other way round, 1 English foot = 1.03 Roman feet.

In time, Roman measures were established in Britain, but as to when and how the change from the Roman to the British foot took place we have no evidence. Various surmises are possible. It is known that the Gothic nations in the fourth and fifth centuries, established in the neighbourhood of the Crimea, used a large cubit. This became the basis of the Russian measures prior to the reign of Peter the Great, and may have travelled westward with the Goths and been brought to England by the Anglo-Saxons. But more likely it was a chance alteration. Maybe King Henry I. did fix the yard by the outstretch of his arm, and this happened to give a foot some three per cent in excess of the Roman foot.

King David of Scotland (c. 1150) ordained that the Scotch inch should be the mean measure of the thumbs of three men, the thumbs being measured at the root of the nail. There was a standard foot fixed in Old St. Paul's and all measures were referred to the standard, "qui insculpitur super basem columpnae in Ecclesia Sancti Pauli".

In the time of Queen Elizabeth, steps were taken to fix definite standards of measurement, but before telling of these it is desirable to refer to the history of weights.

#### ANCIENT STANDARDS OF WEIGHT.

The standard of weight in Sumerian times was the mina, the history of which has been very fully examined by Col. Belaiew. From the mina in course of time came the talent, and the Alexandrian talent formed the basis of the Greek, Roman, and western European weights until the advent of the metric system.

The Alexandrian talent was divided by the Romans into 125 libræ, each containing 12 unciaë, so that there were 1500 ounces to the talent. The weight of the talent has been found to be 93.65 lb. avoirdupois or 655,550 grains. Thus the weight of the Roman ounce was 437 grains while the pound contained 5244 grains. This weight became current in Britain, but the pound, instead of remaining at 12 oz. was raised to 16 oz., each of 437 grains, and possibly became the basis of our avoirdupois weight, a pound of 6992 grains. Another suggestion is that the pound avoirdupois came from the Attic mina of 6945 grains.

The Saxon kings, however, had brought to England as a standard weight the marc of Cologne. Two marcs weighed 7216 grains and were divided

into 16 oz. each of 451 grains. Twelve of these ounces, reckoned as weighing 450 grains each, constituted the Tower or Mint pound<sup>1</sup> by which the coinage was weighed. In the time of Edward III., a Tower pound of silver was coined into 240 silver pennies each weighing 22.5 grains, giving 5400 grains for the pound and 450 for the ounce.

There was another pound in ordinary use, the Troy pound. Its origin is uncertain. In France we find a Marc de Troyes of 472 grains to the ounce and it may have come from that. Another suggestion is that the word troy has no reference to the French town but rather to Troy Novant, a monkish name of London founded on the legend of Brutus. Troy weight was mentioned in the reign of Henry IV., and in the time of Henry V. goldsmiths were ordered to use "la libre de Troy" and coin 360 pennies from a pound of 5400 grains. Thus a penny weighed 22.5 grains, and an ounce 450 grains.

The troy pound became the standard for the coinage in 1527, when Henry VIII. enacted that "the pounce Towre shall be no more used, but all manner of golde and sylver shall be wayed by the pounce Troye which maketh XII. oz Troye and which exceedith the pounce Towre by III. quarters of the ounce". This would make the pound troy weigh 5737.5 grains. It was afterwards defined as 5760 grains, and the ounce troy (1/12 part) as 480 grains.

Throughout this time avoirdupois weights, though not defined by statute until 1485, had been used, and from quite early days a Libra Mercatoria one-fourth greater than the Tower pound and containing therefore 6750 grains was employed.

In the time of Edward III. (1352) we read of weighings "cum ponderibus de haberdepase", and weights of this denomination existed in the time of Elizabeth. "Haberty poie" pound is mentioned in the time of Henry VII. Henry VIII. (1532) ordered that meat shall be sold by weight called Haver-du-pois.<sup>2</sup> The Avoirdupois pound contained 16 Roman ounces of 437 grains each—6992 to the pound.

Elizabeth by her action in 1574 introduced what has become our modern system of weights and measures. She ordered a jury to examine the standard weights and measures in use, to report on them, and to construct standards "as well of troy

<sup>1</sup> In 1842 a Tower pound from the Pyx Chamber was found to weigh 5404 grains.

<sup>2</sup> According to the "New English Dictionary", quoted by Nicolson, to whose book, "Men and Measures", I am indebted for much of this account of English weights, Averdepois is the best spelling of the name. *Aver* is an old-established English word for 'goods'.



weight as of avoirdupois". The existing standards were found to be very erroneous, and a second jury was appointed in 1584. The result of their work was the production of 57 sets of weights, both troy and avoirdupois, which were distributed to the Exchequer and various local authorities. Some of these weights are still extant, and do not differ by more than a grain from the Imperial standard.

Either at this period or previously the weight of the avoirdupois pound was raised by 8 grains, bringing it from 6992 to 7000 grains, at which it has remained ever since. Thus the avoirdupois ounce is 437.5 grains.

The Proclamation for Weights of Dec. 16, 1587, established avoirdupois weight, and ordered that no "person shall use any Troy weight but only for weighing of bread, gold, silver, and electuaries and for no other thing".<sup>3</sup> In addition, standards of length and capacity were constructed; the standard yard of Elizabeth is continually referred to later and was an important factor in determining the length of our present standard. The work was well done, and supplied in a satisfactory manner the needs of the country for more than a hundred and fifty years.

#### THE PYRAMIDS AND THE CUBITS—EGYPTIAN STANDARDS.

Before continuing the history of these standards, it is of interest to go back to Egyptian times and to the Pyramids, and to learn more about those standards from which ours have undoubtedly come. I have based our foot on the common or Olympic cubit of 18.24 inches, but there were many other cubits. One in particular, the Royal cubit of Egypt, is closely connected with the building of the Great Pyramid.

John Greaves, Savilian professor of astronomy at Oxford in 1643-49, became professor of geometry in Gresham College, London, in 1631, and after some visits to the Continent started on a journey to the East in 1637. After visiting Rome and Constantinople, he arrived at Alexandria in 1638, and thence "he went twice to Grand Cairo to measure the Pyramids, carrying with him a Radius of ten feet, most accurately divided into 10,000 parts, besides some other instruments for the fuller discovery of the truth".<sup>4</sup>

In his "Dissertation on Cubits", Newton sets down

the dimensions given by Greaves for various parts of the Pyramid. He then argues, following Greaves, that the builder probably used a definite unit in the design of his work, and by comparing the figures endeavours to fix on that unit; the result is shown in the following table, in which are included the dimensions of two of the principal passages and of the great central chamber, as well as the length of one side of the great Pyramid.

TABLE OF GREAVES' MEASUREMENTS OF THE PYRAMIDS.

Part Measured.	Dimensions in Feet.	Value of Cubit deduced.
Breadth of entrance gallery .	3.463	2 × 1.732
Breadth of main gallery .	6.870	4 × 1.718
Height of side benches in main gallery . . . . .	1.717	1.717
Breadth of side benches in main gallery . . . . .	1.717	1.717
Length of central chamber .	34.380	20 × 1.719
Breadth of central chamber .	17.190	10 × 1.719
Length of north side of base .	693	400 × 1.732

The mean value for the cubit, excluding the first and last, Newton takes as 1.719 ft. The last line of the table, as will appear shortly, is clearly erroneous; as to the difference between the first line and the others, Newton remarks that it comes to about 1/7 in., which is "an error of no importance if we consider the much greater irregularities observed by Mr. Greaves in the best buildings of the Romans".

As to the base measurement there is clearly some error; the true base was covered by debris until recently and could not have been measured by Greaves.

If we take Newton's value 1.719 ft. as the outcome of Greaves' measurements in 1638-39, we obtain as the length of the Royal cubit used in the interior of the Great Pyramid, 20.628 inches. There is ample evidence that a cubit of about this size was in general use. There is one in the British Museum, another in the Liverpool Museum, and a third in Paris. Mr. Nicolson mentions others.

The cubit is found also on the outside of the Great Pyramid; at each corner were vertical walls, used by the builder to set out the slope of the faces. Two of these are extant and are marked in cubits of this size. From this it would appear that the Royal cubit was used throughout the building. Moreover, there still exist a number of Nilometers, used in ancient times to measure the height of the Nile flood along the valley. These are marked in cubits. Several of them were measured by Sir

<sup>3</sup> Nicolson, "Men and Measures," p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> The life of Mr. John Greaves, by Thos. Birch, Sec. R.S., prefixed to the miscellaneous works of Mr. John Greaves, Professor of Astronomy in the University of Oxford. Published by Thos. Birch, F.R.S., 1737.



Henry Lyons and Dr. Borchardt when in Egypt, with the following results :

Nilometer.	No. of Cubit Lengths.	Average Cubit in Metres.
Philae I. . . . .	12	0.520
Philae II. . . . .	12	0.532
Philae III. . . . .	16	0.535
Elephantine . . . . .	12	0.523
Edfu . . . . .	6	0.528
Esna . . . . .	9	0.532
Luxor . . . . .	6	0.529

The mean of these is 0.528 metre or 20.8 inches. Other measurements have given a rather less result.

The mean value found by Mr. Cole for the length of the side of the base was 755.8 feet. If this is to contain an even number of cubits of about the length found otherwise for the Royal cubit, that number will be 440. Assuming this as the number of cubits in a side, the length of the cubit is 1.718 ft. or 20.62 in.

The following give the lengths of the four sides of the base as measured by Sir Flinders Petrie and Mr. J. H. Cole :

	Sir Flinders Petrie.	Mr. J. H. Cole.
North	755 ft. 9 in.	755 ft. 5 in.
East	755 ft. 8 in.	756 ft. 1 in.
South	755 ft. 9 in.	755 ft. 11 in.
West	755 ft. 9 in.	755 ft. 10 in.
Mean	755 ft. 8.7 in.	755 ft. 10 in.

The agreement is practically complete.

Thus we have found good cause to suppose that there were two cubits in general use—there were others besides—one 18.24 inches in length, the other 20.62 inches. It is, perhaps, natural to inquire what was the reason for this, and Col. Belaiew pointed out to me a fact of interest in this connexion.

We know if we call  $l$  and  $L$  the lengths of the two, we have

$$\frac{l}{L} = \frac{18.24}{20.62} = 0.885 = \frac{1}{2}\sqrt{\pi} \text{ approximately.}$$

Thus  $l^2 = \frac{1}{4}\pi L^2$ .

Hence the area of a square having the small cubit for a side is equal to that of a circle with the large cubit for its diameter. This may, of course, be chance or it may be that some ancient Egyptian, wishing to construct a circle of the same area as the square, found the large cubit. We know that the value 256/81 was used for  $\pi$ , so that  $\sqrt{\pi} = 16/9$ .

There are other curious facts connected with the dimensions of the Great Pyramid. Its perimeter, following Mr. Cole, is  $4 \times 755.8$  or 3023.2 ft. Earlier

measurements made the base 760 ft. in length and the perimeter 3040 ft. Now the mean length of a nautical—meridian—mile, the sixtieth part of a degree, is 6080 ft. Thus the perimeter of the Pyramid is very approximately half a meridian mile. Did the wise men of old know this, and were they aware that the earth is spherical and about 8000 miles in diameter? If the perimeter of the Pyramid was 2000 Olympic cubits, then the Olympic cubit is 1/4000 of a meridian mile and the Olympic fathom—the Greek *orgia* of 4 cubits—is one sixty-thousandth of a degree.

It is all very curious; but can we credit such knowledge to the men who designed the Pyramids? They placed them very accurately with regard to the meridian; the faces of the Great Pyramid are only 3' 43" out, while the entrance gallery was directed towards *a Draconis*, the Pole Star some 5000 years ago. Thales of Miletus, born 640 B.C., taught that the earth was spherical and placed it at the centre of the universe. Pythagoras, born 580 B.C., said that the sun was the centre of the planetary world and the earth one of the planets.

#### THE ALEXANDRIAN TALENT.

In connexion with the weights, equally interesting questions arise when one begins to ask, How did men in ancient days settle on their system of weighing? Their standards of length represented, without doubt, the lengths of parts of their own bodies; their weights may well have been chosen to represent a definite quantity of some commodity in daily use—wheat or barley, the weight and length of the grain of which has been in all countries intimately connected with standards of weight and length. The kilogramme was intended to be the weight of a unit of volume of water. How far back does this idea go? We have seen that the Alexandrian talent weighed 93.65 lb. A simple calculation shows that the weight of a Royal cubic foot of water is 2594/27.71 lb. or 93.61 lb. Is it a coincidence that the weight of the talent of Alexandria is so closely that of a Royal cubic foot of water, or is the suggestion made by Mr. Nicolson that the agreement was designed, correct?

#### THE FOOT AND THE OUNCE.

Here it is perhaps relevant to refer to another suggestion made by Mr. Nicolson in an endeavour to account for the difference between the Olympic and the British foot. It is that the foot was chosen so as to make a cubic foot of water weigh 1000 ounces of (at the time) 437 grains each. This will be found to be very closely the case. But I am digressing



into curiosities of metrology. The weight of a cubic foot of water was investigated by the Oxford Philosophical Society in 1685. When Wren and the founders of the Royal Society moved to London, those of the members left behind at Oxford continued their meetings,<sup>5</sup> and at one of these, two members, Messrs. Caswell and Walker, described how they had made a hollow cube of very hard dry oak, each edge of which was very exactly one foot, with which they proposed to determine the weight of a cubic foot of water. At a later meeting they communicated their result to the Society, finding it to be 1000 oz., and their result, along with the weights found for the same volume of a number of other substances, was sent to the Royal Society and is printed in the *Philosophical Transactions*<sup>6</sup> along with their table of specific gravities.

This has brought us very close to what I may perhaps call the more scientific period of our subject, and we may leave the speculations, interesting though they are, that centre round the Pyramids and their architects.

#### THE ROYAL SOCIETY AND WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

We come now to more modern times, some two hundred years ago, and from that date onwards we can trace with more certainty the history of our weights and measures.

In 1742, George II. was on the throne; the Royal Society had been founded for nearly eighty years and its fellows were actively engaged in the pursuit of natural knowledge; the importance of exact measurement was becoming more fully recognised. Vol. 42 of the *Transactions* for 1742-43 contains the account of various comparisons of weights and measures. In it is also described the laying down of 3 ft. on a brass bar belonging to the Royal Society from a scale at the Tower.

Owing mainly to the action of Graham, sundry comparisons with French and other measures were made, and with this object he had two yard measures and two pound weights carefully made and examined. One of each of these was sent to Paris by the Society and, at the request of the French men of science, were compared with the French standards by M. du Fay and the Abbé Nollet. This seems to have led to the suggestion that a formal comparison of the existing standards of length and weight was desirable, and a committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Macclesfield, undertook the task and reported on June 16, 1743.

Among the standards compared were those included in the following table:

Royal Society yard	+ 0.0075 in.
Henry VII. yard	- 0.0071 in.
Guildhall yard	+ 0.0434 to 0.0396 in.
Clockworkers' yard	- 0.021 in.
Tower yard	+ 0.011 in.

The committee also examined a series of weights from the Exchequer and elsewhere.

From the time of Edward I., the troy pound is defined as containing 12 troy ounces each of twenty pennyweight; but no standard troy pound was found; 12 ounces taken from a box containing 256 ounce weights were therefore selected as representing the pound troy.

There was, however, a series of avoirdupois weights, from 1 lb. to 14 lb., marked Elizabeth Regina 1582, and a 7 lb. wt. VI. Ed. 1588. Various comparisons led to the following results for the lb. and oz. avoirdupois in grains:

Pound	.	.	.	6998	7000.7	7000.2
Ounce	.	.	.	437.4	437.54	437.51

Of the weights in the possession of the Royal Society, the avoirdupois pound was lighter than the standard by one grain, and the troy pound lighter by half a grain. This constitutes the earliest systematic comparison of our weights and measures that I have found.

It was realised that the length of the standards varied with temperature, but it was held that since all were of much the same material the differences would not be affected.

Two standard bars were made by Bird in 1758 and 1760 respectively for a committee appointed by the House of Commons under the chairmanship of Lord Carysfort. These were to be copies of the Royal Society standard as laid down by Graham, 1742-43. One, marked Standard Yard 1758, was presented to the House as the legal standard of length. Both were compared in 1768 with the Royal Society standard, while in 1785 a scale made for General Roy's measurement of an arc of the meridian on Hounslow Heath was graduated in terms of the same standard. Bills were presented to the House of Commons in 1765 to give effect to the recommendations of this and of a subsequent committee, but from some accident they did not become law and the country remained without legal standards for the next sixty years.

The modern method, employing micrometer microscopes, was used for the first time by Troughton in his comparison of a line standard constructed

<sup>5</sup> Their Minute Book is now at the Royal Society, and from it these notes are taken.

<sup>6</sup> *Phil. Trans.*, No. 169, p. 926, Mar. 23, 1685.



in 1792 for Sir George Shuckburgh. In 1814 a report was presented to the House of Commons by a new committee which asked Dr. Hyde Wollaston and Prof. Playfair for advice. They stated that the length of the pendulum vibrating seconds had been found to be 39·13047 in. and that the metre of platina measured, at the temperature of 55°, 39·3828 English inches, representing at 32° the ten-millionth part of the quadrant of the meridian. They recommended, upon the suggestion of Dr. Wollaston, "that a gallon containing ten pounds of pure water should be adopted as a substitute for the ale and corn gallons".

In 1816 there still remained considerable doubt both as to the length of the seconds pendulum and the relation of the metre to the inch; the Astronomer Royal, Dr. Pond, was instructed by Parliament to make the measurements necessary to remove the doubt. He asked for the assistance of the Royal Society, and a committee was appointed for the purpose.

A number of experiments were made by various methods (Capt. Kater's pendulum work is described in the *Phil. Trans.* for 1826, 1830, and 1831), and in 1818 a Commission was appointed, under writ of the Privy Seal, "to discuss the matter more minutely than could be done with convenience before a Committee of either House of Parliament".

The report of this Commission drawn up by Dr. Young is of great interest; and as a result a Bill giving effect to their conclusions was brought into the House of Commons by Sir George Clerk in 1822, and again, with a few amendments, in 1823. This was nearly identical with an Act passed on June 17, 1824, which came into force on Jan. 1, 1826.

The Commissioners ultimately recommended for the legal determination of the standard yard Bird's standard of 1760. It was found to agree very closely with Sir George Shuckburgh's yard, with which the length of the pendulum and the metre had been compared, and a facsimile of which was known to exist at Geneva, and the Act enacted "that the straight line or distance between the centre of the two points in the gold studs in the straight brass rod now in the custody of the Clerk to the House of Commons whereon the words and figures Standard Yard 1760 are engraved shall be and the same is hereby declared to be the original and genuine standard of that measure of length or linear dimension called a yard". The distance when the rod was at a temperature of 62° Fah. was denominated the Imperial Standard Yard, and all other measures of extension were to be multiples or sub-multiples of this standard.

For the standard of weight the Commissioners recommended in 1823: "That the Standard brass weight of one pound Troy weight in the year 1758 now in the custody of the Clerk of the House of Commons shall be, and the same is hereby declared to be the original and genuine standard of weight; and that such brass weight shall be and is hereby denominated the Imperial Standard Troy Pound". This troy pound was declared to contain 5760 grains, "and 7000 such grains shall be and are hereby declared to be a pound Avoirdupois".

For the recovery of the standards if lost, destroyed, defaced, or otherwise injured, suitable provision was made in the Act; the yard was to be recovered from the length of the seconds pendulum, which when vibrating in a vacuum at sea level in the latitude of London was stated to be 39·1393 in., while it was held that the pound could be reconstructed from the fact that a cubic inch of distilled water weighed by brass weights in a vacuum at a temperature of 62° had been found to weigh 252·724 grains.

#### THE MODERN STANDARDS.

The need for reconstruction came all too soon. In 1834 the Houses of Parliament were destroyed by fire; the pound standard was lost entirely, the yard standard was damaged, one of the gold plugs having been melted so that its centre point could no longer be determined with accuracy.

In 1838 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Right Hon. T. Spring Rice, set up a Commission to advise as to the steps necessary to replace the standards.

Meanwhile, since 1824 a number of criticisms of the means suggested for recovering the standards had been made. Certain of the corrections employed by Kater in determining the length of the seconds pendulum were shown to be in error; while the agreement among the various determinations of the weight of a cubic inch of water left the true value in doubt, and the committee of 1838, accepting these criticisms, threw over the methods provided in the Act of 1824 and advised, with regard to the pound, that it should be recovered by comparison with copies which were known to exist and that the pound avoirdupois should be the standard. As to the yard, it was stated that "Several measures now exist which were most accurately compared with the Standard yard . . . and by the use of these the values of the original standards can be respectively restored without sensible error". The committee, therefore, recommended a material standard, "the distance between two points or lines engraved on metal, but



that the standard be in no way defined by reference to any natural basis, such as the length of a degree of a meridian on the earth's surface in an assigned latitude or the length of a pendulum vibrating seconds in a given place".

The Government approved this recommendation and appointed a scientific committee in 1843 to reconstruct new Parliamentary standards of length and weight.

#### THE POUND.

Prof. Miller was entrusted with the construction of the pound, Mr. Baily with that of the yard. Prof. Miller has described his work very fully in a Royal Society paper.<sup>7</sup> The standard weight of 1824, made of platinum, was known as *U*. It had been compared in 1824–25 by Capt. Kater with five gun-metal standards deposited at the Exchequer, the Royal Mint, and with the civic authorities in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin.

In 1829, *U* had been compared by Capt. V. Nehus with a platinum pound (*R.S.*) belonging to the Royal Society, and also with two brass pounds and a platinum pound (*Sp.*) in the custody of Prof. Schumacher. These weights, with a number of gun-metal copies, were available for the construction of the new pound. The comparison showed considerable discrepancies in the values of the gun-metal and brass weights, and in the end it was resolved, "with the consent of the Astronomer Royal, to rest for the evidence of the weight of the lost Standard entirely on the comparisons of the two platinum Standards *Sp.* and *R.S.*"

As the result of this work, and the corresponding work on the yard, our present standards came into existence, and the Weights and Measures Act of 1855 prescribes that:

"Whereas by Act of the Fifth Year of King George IV. a standard brass weight of one pound troy, made in the year 1758, then in the custody of the Clerk of the House of Commons, should be the genuine standard of weight, and whereas there exist weights which had been accurately compared with the said Standard Pound Troy which afforded sufficient means for restoring such original Standard:

"The said weight of Platinum marked P.S. 1844 1 lb. deposited in the Office of the Exchequer as aforesaid shall be and be denominated the Imperial Standard Pound Avoirdupois. The one 7000th part of this shall be a grain and 5760 such grains shall be a Pound Troy."

Provision is made in the Act for recovery of the

standard if lost by comparison with copies made and distributed among various authorities. Thus the pound avoirdupois became our standard of weight, and the pound troy followed in the path of the King's Tower pound.

#### THE YARD.

Mr. Baily, at the request of the committee, undertook the reconstruction of the yard. The account<sup>8</sup> of the work is given by Sir George Airy as chairman in a paper in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society.

In addition to the damaged standard, the following were available for comparison: a scale, No. 46, belonging to the Royal Society, a scale belonging to the Royal Astronomical Society, two three-foot bars of the Ordnance Society. There was also the Shuckburgh scale of 1792, but on account of certain imperfections little importance was attached to it.

The standard was to be of bell metal or steel, a rectangular bar of about 1 in. square in section, with the ends notched away to half the thickness. The marks defining the length were to be on plugs inserted flush with the surface, and the standard was to be correct at 61° or 62° F. The ends were cut away in order that the marks might be in the median plane of the bar and the effect of flexure when supported at two points minimised. For the standard finally settled on, an alloy, since known as Baily's metal, consisting of copper 16 parts, tin 2½ parts, and zinc 1 part, was used.

Faraday was consulted somewhat later as to the stability of such an alloy, and wrote: "I do not see why a pure metal should be particularly free from internal changes. . . . I suppose the labour would be too great to lay down the standard on different metals and substances, and yet the comparison of these might be very important hereafter, for twenty years do seem to do or tell a great deal in relation to standard measures."

Baily also introduced the method of drilling a hole in the bar down to the median section, and fixing the plug with the mark at the bottom of this instead of notching the end as Kater had done. His work was cut short by his death in August 1844.

At this stage, Sheepshanks offered to take Baily's place, and the question immediately before the committee was whether to attempt to restore the damaged legal standard or to construct a standard from the available material. It was plain that in

<sup>7</sup> On the Construction of the New Imperial Standard Pound by Prof. W. H. Miller, *Phil. Trans.*, 1856.

<sup>8</sup> Account of the Construction of the New National Standard of Length by G. B. Airy, Esq., Astronomer Royal, *Phil. Trans.*, 1857.



the strictly legal or scientific sense the restoration of the standard must be indefinite and the latter plan was approved. Sheepshanks suggested that the necessary apparatus for his comparisons should be set up in the cellar of Somerset House, and made a report on the questions involved, the stability of the material, the thermometric difficulties, etc., as well as on the method he proposed to adopt.

A meeting of the committee was held on June 4, 1847, to inspect these arrangements, and the minutes record that—

"The Committee approve entirely of the course followed by Mr. Sheepshanks and request Mr. Airy to take measures for the exam<sup>n</sup> and discharge of the instrument makers accounts."

Airy's paper already referred to gives very full details of the construction of the standards; it also contains his investigation of the effect of flexure and the determination of best points of support.

Ultimately, six standards of Baily's metal were constructed which were found to have the length of 1 yard at the temperatures indicated below :

No. 1.	.	.	.	Correct at 62°	F.
2.	.	.	.	"	" 61.94 F.
2.	.	.	.	"	" 62.10 F.
4.	.	.	.	"	" 61.98 F.
5.	.	.	.	"	" 62.16 F.
6.	.	.	.	"	" 62.0 F.

Of these, it was arranged that No. 1 should become the standard yard, while 2, 3, 4, and 5 should be known as Parliamentary copies, and No. 6 should be retained by some officer of the Government for the comparison of other standard bars or for other scientific purposes.

Sheepshanks was taken ill while actually engaged in his comparisons; he died the day before Royal Assent was given in 1855 to the Act establishing the new measures. Thus as a result of the death of the two men who had done most of the work, the Royal Society paper in which an account of it is to be found was written by Airy. The Act (July 30, 1855) provides that :

"The straight Line or Distance between the Centres of the two Gold Plugs in the Bronze Bar deposited in the Office of the Exchequer as aforesaid shall be the genuine standard of that Measure of Length called a Yard and the said straight Line or Distance between the Centres of the said Gold Plugs or Pins in the said Bronze Bar (the Bronze being at a temperature of Sixty two Degrees by Fahrenheit's Thermometer) shall and be deemed to be the Imperial Standard Yard."

Thirty-seven copies were made and distributed.

Such were the conclusions enacted in the Weights

and Measures Act of 1855, and they have remained unaltered up to the present time.

Since that date there have been various supplementary or consolidating Acts. In 1864 the Metric Weights and Measures Act was passed. It provided that "No contract . . . shall be deemed to be invalid or open to objection . . . on the ground that the Weights and Measures expressed . . . are Weights or Measures of the Metric System", and it gives a schedule of tables of metric measures expressed by means of legalised denominations of weights and measures in Great Britain, thus legalising the metric system but not providing any metric standards for purposes of comparison and verification.

In 1866 the custody of the Imperial standards of length and weight and of all secondary standards was transferred by Act of Parliament to the Board of Trade. Parliamentary copies of the yard and pound were placed at the Royal Mint, with the Royal Society, and at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, and it became the duty of the Board to cause these to be compared every ten years with the standards in their charge. For this and other purposes connected with standards, the Board was to constitute a department to be called the Standards Office, and "shall appoint as Head of that Department an Officer to be called the Warden of the Standards", with assistants, clerks, etc., and the Act lays down the duty of the Warden.

The procedure was modified by an Act of 1878 which provided that the Board of Trade shall discharge the duties previously assigned to the Warden.

This Act also gives a schedule of metric equivalents and a list of metric standards in the custody of the Board, and provides (par. 38): "Whereas the Board of Trade have obtained accurate copies of the Metric Standards and it is expedient to make provision for the verification of Metric Weights, the Board of Trade may, if they think fit, cause to be compared with the metric standards in their custody all metric weights and measures submitted for the purpose".

A Metric Convention (Convention du Mètre) had been agreed to among a large number of nations in 1875. To this, Great Britain adhered in 1884, and comparisons between the metric and British measures were set on foot. In 1889 certified copies of the metre and kilogramme were deposited at the Board of Trade.

As a result of the comparisons carried out with great care by Mr. Chaney on behalf of the Board of Trade and M. Benoit of the Bureau des Poids et



Mesures, the value 1 metre, 39·370113 inches became the legal equivalent under an Act of 1897.

This gave to the Queen in Council power to make a table of metric equivalents in substitution for the table in the schedule to the Act of 1878 and provided that the Board of Trade standards, which may be made under par. (8) of the Act of 1878, shall include standards from the Metre No. 16 and the Kilogramme No. 18 deposited with the Board of Trade.

Under the provisions of this Act a table of metric equivalents was issued in 1898 according to which

$$\begin{aligned} 1 \text{ metre} &= 39\cdot370113 \text{ in.} \\ 1 \text{ kilogramme} &= 2\cdot2046223 \text{ lb.} \end{aligned}$$

The most recent comparison of the yard and metre is that made at the National Physical Laboratory in 1927, which leads to the result that

$$\begin{aligned} 1 \text{ metre} &= 39\cdot370147 \text{ in.} \\ 1 \text{ inch} &= 25\cdot399956 \text{ mm.} \end{aligned}$$

Here, perhaps, a reference to the Metric Convention is desirable. An International Metric Commission was convened at Paris in 1872 to consider the question of the construction and issue of metric standards of weight and measure. A committee was appointed to make the necessary preliminary investigations, and as the result a convention was agreed to on May 20, 1875, by a large number of States. Great Britain adhered to the Convention in 1884. The Convention provided that the contracting parties should set up at Sèvres an International Bureau of Weights and Measures at which the International prototypes of the kilogramme and metre were to be kept.

For the control of the Bureau an International Committee of weights and measures was established, consisting of fourteen members belonging to different countries. This committee was placed under the authority of a general Conference of weights and measures formed of delegates from all countries adhering to the Convention, which meets whenever convoked by the International Committee and in any case once in every six years.

#### INTER-DOMINION STANDARDS.

Before leaving this part of our subject—the present position of our national standards—a brief reference should be made to the Conference on Standardisation<sup>9</sup> held at the Board of Trade in October 1930 under the chairmanship of Mr. W. R. Smith, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Board. The

Conference was attended by representatives of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, the Irish Free State, and India.

The work of the Conference was divided into two parts relating respectively to fundamental standards and to industrial standardisation. Sir Joseph Petavel acted as chairman of the section dealing with fundamental standards. The Imperial Conference held at the same time accepted the Report of the Conference on Standardisation and adopted the resolutions submitted therewith.

These resolutions, so far as they deal with fundamental standards, were :

(1) That it is desirable that there should be uniformity between the standards employed for all units of measurement which are in common use among the British Commonwealth of Nations.

(2) In order to secure uniformity arrangements should be made : (a) To provide in each Dominion and in India suitable reference standards for each unit of measurement required for use in that country where not already available ; and (b) to introduce suitable procedure whereby all such standards shall be periodically compared with the corresponding standards at the Board of Trade or at the National Physical Laboratory.

(3) At least one member of the Commonwealth should undertake research work with the object of enabling the fundamental standards to be referred ultimately to natural standards such as the wavelength of light. It would be a great advantage if it were possible for research work of this character to be carried out independently by more than one member.

The Report of the Fundamental Standards Committee defines the fundamental standards both on the British system and on the metric system which constitute the fundamental units of measurement legal for use throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations. It is noted that in India the railway system of weights in common use is defined in terms of the pound.

It is explained that the term "reference standard" is used to denote a standard of suitable form and construction preserved under suitable conditions to serve as the basis of reference for the determination of any unit of measurement within one of the Dominions or of India.

In accordance with the recommendation of the Report, the errors, if any, of such reference standards in relation to the fundamental standards or to the theoretical definitions of the units they represent are to be ascertained from time to time by comparison with the corresponding standards in use in the United Kingdom, and are to be allowed for in the use of the reference standards.

The Report concludes with a list of the principal units for which reference standards are likely to be required, with suggested procedure in regard to each. Thus a simple and definite system has been

<sup>9</sup> Report of the Conference on Standardisation (including Resolutions adopted by the Imperial Conference). Presented to Parliament by command of His Majesty, Nov. 1930. Cmd. 3716. 1930.



set up by the Imperial Conference of 1930 for securing uniformity of standards throughout Great Britain, the Dominions, and India.

#### STANDARDS OF TIME AND ELECTRICAL STANDARDS.

In addition to this account of the development of standards of length and mass, Sir Richard Glazebrook dealt briefly with time. After noting that the measurement of time rested on astronomical observations and referring to various ancient means of indicating its passage, he described in some detail the clock recently developed by Mr. Shortt in association with the Synchronome Company and the crystal vibrator constructed by Mr. Marrison, of the Bell Telephone Company, referring in connexion with these to Mr. Loomis' paper read recently before the Royal Astronomical Society. In this connexion he mentioned work now in progress at the National Physical Laboratory.

As to electrical standards, Sir Richard recalled the fact that these had been dealt with very fully up to the year 1913 in his Kelvin Lecture before the Institution of Electrical Engineers, and he restated briefly some of the principal conclusions of that lecture. Coming to more recent times, he quoted the important resolution of the International Committee of Weights and Measures of Oct. 4, 1927, approving the organisation of a Consultative Committee for Electricity to advise the International Committee of Weights and Measures on questions relating to systems of measurement of electrical standards, and, after discussing the difference between the material standards of length and mass and electrical standards for which no permanent material standards can exist, he explained the plan approved by the Committee for their work.

It is not possible to equip the Bureau with invariable material standards against which national standards can be compared. Recourse must be had to experimental determinations of the fundamental electrical units in terms of the units of length, mass, and time. The national and other laboratories of several countries are already equipped for such work, and the staffs have considerable experience. It has been agreed, therefore, to leave all such work to these laboratories, and arrangements have been made with this object; the national laboratories will from time to time send the results of their work to Sèvres. Meanwhile, the International Bureau will organise the systematic exchange of standards (étalons) and secure the co-ordination (assurer la synthèse) of the results of comparisons made by the national laboratories, and will set up a collection of working and reference standards together with the laboratory equipment for the comparison with these of the material standards sent by various countries for exact determination.

In this way, while the experimental work of realising the material standards from the electrical units of the C.G.S. system will rest with the national laboratories, the International Committee will have the responsibility of fixing and promulgating the

values to be employed for practical standards, and of fixing the date of any fresh revision.

As to the values of the present international units, Dr. Dye has prepared the following table :

Values of International Units (1831) in Terms of C.G.S. Units.	
International ohm	$(1.00051 \pm 0.00002) 10^9$
„ ampere	$(1 - 0.00006 \pm 0.00006) 10^4$
„ volt	$(1.00045 \pm 0.00008) 10^8$
„ watt	$(1.00039 \pm 0.00014) 10^7$
E.M.F. of Weston Normal Cell at 20° C.	$1.01876 \times 10^8$ C.G.S. units.

#### NATURAL AND ARBITRARY STANDARDS.

If we look back over the history of the past, we may note some interesting changes in the views of scientific men as to the bases on which to rest their standards of measurement.

It is obvious that weights and measures began with some natural objects selected for their convenience and sufficiently constant in quantity for the simple needs of the times. Such were the length of a man's forearm or the weight of corn—possibly of water—contained in a vessel approximately constant in volume.

In time, uniformity became more important, and so we pass from the length of the king's arm to the scale engraved on the wall or floor of the cathedral, and from the weight of so many grains of wheat taken from the middle of the ear to the mass of a lump of metal.

The jury of Queen Elizabeth's time, to which we owe our modern system, paid little attention, it is probable, to the origin of the yard or the pound; they fixed on the length of a metal bar and the weight of a lump of iron and prescribed that these were to be the standards, trusting to the permanence of these material objects rather than to any natural laws which might serve for their definition. They were, no doubt, severely practical; a change came in England in the early days of the Royal Society, when we find Caswell and Walker endeavouring to connect the weight and volume of a quantity of water and thus establish a natural standard of weight in terms of the standard of length—trying possibly to repeat what had been done in Egypt long ago.

Then, some fifty years later, Graham, realising that there was a definite relation between the period of a body in oscillation, its dimensions, and the distribution of its mass, endeavoured to connect the period of a seconds pendulum with its length, and set about the comparison of existing material standards, to find one in terms of which to express



the length of the pendulum, thus leading to the Report of Lord Macclesfield's Committee in 1743.

Inter-comparisons between existing standards continued to be made, and the idea of basing that of length on the seconds pendulum increased in favour, until in 1814 the House of Commons asked for a formal statement of the length, and two years later the Astronomer Royal was instructed to determine it. Kater's work followed, with the result that, while in 1824 certain material standards—Bird's bar of 1760 and a brass weight of 1 lb. troy dated 1758—were made the legal standards, they were to be recovered, if lost, by reference to natural standards, the length of the seconds pendulum and the weight of a cubic inch of water.

This recourse to natural standards did not last long. Scientific men discovered that it was simpler to compare a standard with its copies, and to recover its value, if lost, by the aid of those copies, than to determine the length of the seconds pendulum or the mass of a cubic inch of water, and so, in 1843, the recommendations of 1824 were thrown over; the scientific committee, appointed to advise, recommended that the standards which had been lost in the fire of 1834 should be recovered from their copies, "and that the Standard be in no way defined by reference to any natural basis". More trust could be placed in the permanence of a material standard and on the accuracy with which it could be recovered by the inter-comparison of its copies, than on the result of any attempt to reconstruct it, based on some natural law; and so it has remained up to the present.

In France the history has been the same. The Constituent Assembly entrusted the Academy of Sciences with the duty of introducing a new system of measures, and in 1788 a report was issued on the choice of a unit of measure drawn up by Borda, Lagrange, Laplace, Monge, and Condorcet.

The report discussed the advantages of employing either the length of the seconds pendulum or that of a meridian of the earth as the basis of length measurement, and decided in favour of the latter, which, in the words of Laplace, "appears to be of very high antiquity". So the metric system came into being. Delambre and Mechain measured the length of an arc from Dunkirk to Barcelona, and hence calculated the length of the quadrant as 5,130,740 of a certain iron Toise, when at a temperature of 61.5° F. The metre was fixed as one ten-millionth of this length, and a standard metre constructed to represent it, while the kilogramme was to be the mass of a cubic decimetre of water at the temperature of its maximum density, and a platinum

weight was constructed with great care to have this mass when weighed *in vacuo*.

While these material standards continue to exist, research has shown that they no longer represent the definitions. The metre is still the distance between the marks on a certain bar of platinum iridium, but the earth's quadrant is not  $10^7$  of these metres, while different meridians differ in length; the earth is not a spheroid. The best mean figure obtainable seems to be 1 meridional earth quadrant = 10,002,090 m.

The platinum mass, known as the Kilogramme des Archives, is still the standard kilogramme, but the mass of a cubic decimetre of water, at 4° C. approximately, has been found to be 999.972 grammes; or alternately 1000.028 c.c. is the volume of a kilogramme of water at the temperature of its maximum density and under normal atmospheric pressure.

Neither the seconds pendulum nor a quadrant of the earth has proved to be more satisfactory than the material standard. This was the case when Michelson in 1889, realising that the wave-length of light of a given frequency was invariable, suggested its use as an ultimate standard of length. There was the difficulty of stepping from so small a unit as a wave-length of light up to the metre, but he pointed out that one can bridge over the distance by using a number of standards each approximately, but not quite, double the distance of the last, employing interference methods to determine the difference between the length of the larger standard and twice that of the smaller. Light directed so as to traverse the smaller distance twice was made to interfere with light which has only once traversed the longer distance. Michelson had an opportunity of carrying this idea into practice somewhat later at the Bureau des Poids et Mesures at Sèvres, and found from observations on the red line of cadmium that its wave-length is given by

$$\lambda_r = 0.64384722 \times 10^{-6} \text{ metre.}$$

Somewhat later, in 1913, Messrs. Benoit, Fabry and Perot at the Bureau International repeated the measurement, using a modification of the method, and found

$$\lambda_r = 0.64384704 \times 10^{-6} \text{ metre.}$$

Since that date measurements have been made in Japan by Messrs. Watambe and Timaszumi, leading to the value

$$\lambda_r = 0.64384685 \times 10^{-6} \text{ metre,}$$

while Dr. Tutton communicated to the Royal Society on April 30 last his results, which gave

$$\lambda_r = 0.64384698 \times 10^{-6} \text{ metre.}$$



A provisional value found at the National Physical Laboratory is

$$\lambda_n = 0.64384714 \times 10^{-6} \text{ metre.}$$

At its meeting in 1925 the International Committee of Weights and Measures agreed in principle to define the unit of length by means of the wave-length of light, subject to the determination by the national laboratories of the most satisfactory method of realisation.

As a result, work has been in progress at the National Physical Laboratory for some time, and now is approaching conclusion, while work is also in progress at the Reichsanstalt and the U.S. Bureau of Standards.

Thus it will be seen that the International Committee is prepared to refer the standard metre to a natural standard against which it can be compared. This natural standard will thus be represented by the distance between two marks on a bar of platinum-iridium, and the constancy of this distance will be checked from time to time by comparison with the wave-length of light of definite period.

Hence there is a prospect that a natural standard of length will in time be generally accepted.

As to a standard of mass, up to the present it is not probable that the kilogramme, the mass of a lump of platinum, will be disturbed until we reach the condition when the mass of an atom of hydrogen or (say) an electron can be determined with sufficient accuracy. For a time unit, we already have a natural standard in the sidereal day, and while the frequency of a quartz or other oscillator will certainly be used for comparatively short intervals, it will not replace the day and hour for longer periods.

In electrical standards also a transference to natural standards is taking place. One of the first duties of the Comité Consultatif d'Électricité set up in 1927, as has been stated, is to determine the units in terms of which electromotive force, current, and resistance are to be measured. At present, while the units are defined in terms of the C.G.S. units of length, mass, and time, the standards used in daily work are the International Ohm, Ampere, and Volt. The definitions of these, as has already been explained, were agreed to at the International Conference in London in 1908.

The appliances needed for an absolute deter-

mination of the electrical units are elaborate and expensive. At the time of the London Conference it was realised that the necessary measurements could be made only in a few well-equipped standardising laboratories, while it was felt that the standards for daily use should be such as could be set up without serious difficulty in any laboratory provided with ordinary measuring and weighing apparatus of adequate precision. Hence the adoption of International Standards.

The arrangements proposed at Sèvres by the Comité Consultatif d'Électricité have altered this. When these are complete, any country can have its electrical standards compared against standards maintained at the Bureau, while by the collaboration of countries possessing laboratories, equipped for absolute measurements, these standards can be realised and maintained in much closer agreement with the C.G.S. units than is now the case with the International Ohm, Volt, and Ampere.

Since 1928, and indeed previously to that date, work has been in progress at the National Physical Laboratory in connexion with all the units.

The Ampere balance has been reconstituted; work has been put in hand on a novel method of measuring a resistance suggested some years since by Albert Campbell; preparations are going forward for further measurements with the Viriamu Jones Memorial Lorenz apparatus, and for a re-determination of the electromotive force of a Weston cell.

At the second meeting of the Comité Consultatif d'Électricité in 1930, reports as to progress were received from the National Physical Laboratory, the U.S. Bureau of Standards, the Central Chamber of Weights and Measures of Russia, and the Electro-technical Laboratory of Tokyo.

While, of course, it will be necessary to have at Sèvres material standards or apparatus embodying the results of these various absolute measurements, the standards and apparatus will represent, with all the accuracy possible, multiples of the C.G.S. units themselves, and not standards adopted because, at the time they were defined, they were believed to represent the theoretical units to the highest accuracy then possible.

Thus in electricity we go back through the C.G.S. units to the natural standards of length and time, the wave-length of the red line of cadmium and the sidereal second.



evidence of a large increase in public interest in the Exhibition Galleries in the Institute, the attendance during the year being 608,900, as compared with 398,000 in 1929. The more important work of the Institute, however, in advising as to the utilisation of the resources of raw materials in the British Empire and in promoting the production within the Empire of crops and products which at present are mainly obtained elsewhere, is still hampered by lack of funds. The Research Committee of the Imperial Conference, which met in London in 1930, investigated the Intelligence and Investigation Departments, which are mainly concerned with this vital but less publicly known work of the Institute, and recorded its opinion that this work could be carried out more efficiently and less expensively through the utilisation of the services of the Imperial Institute than in any other manner. During the present Empire-wide depression, no further Government funds are available to extend the Institute's work, but in March 1931 the Secretary of State for the Dominions was able to announce that Mr. Benjamin Drage had contributed £36,000 to the Empire Marketing Fund with the proviso that the sum, to be spread over a period of seven years, should be used to augment the income of the Imperial Institute. The Institute not only advises the Colonies and Dominions upon mineral resources; it is also busy trying to develop the production of commodities like tung oil, pyrethrum flowers, and so on within the British Empire, and is able to report that the London County Council has approved five Empire woods as fire-resisting timbers. The perusal of the Director's brief report will show how wide-flung are its activities.

MR. J. MILTON OFFORD has contributed to the March *Journal* of the Quekett Microscopical Club some interesting recollections of his association with the Club since 1878. At the meeting in January 1879, at which he was elected a member of the Club, Huxley was in the chair and E. T. Newton showed a model of the brain of the cockroach, constructed from slices of wood of appropriate thickness representing the successive serial microscopic sections of the brain. The outlines of the section had been drawn on the slices with the help of a camera lucida and cut out by a fret-saw. These prepared slices when fitted together formed the model—one of the early examples of a method which, after modifications, was, especially in the next twenty years, and still is, regularly employed in many laboratories. Mr. Offord refers to the large conversaciones which were a feature of the society's activities, and directs attention to one held in University College, London, in 1879, at which there were 185 microscopes, and 1050 persons were present. This was regarded as a small attendance for a conversazione and "was put down to the inclement weather, and it being held during Lent".

ON June 27, Prof. G. M. Trevelyan, O.M., representing the National Trust, accepted the deeds of the property of the Longshaw estate for the Trust. This estate is 750 acres in extent, and is the first acquisition made by the National Trust in the Peak district of Derbyshire. It is a beautiful stretch of high woodland and moorland, surrounded by picturesque

heights. When it was offered for sale, a sum of £15,000 was asked for the complete estate, and, since it was threatened to be disposed of as building sites, the Sheffield Council of Social Service and the Sheffield and Peak District branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England took steps to save the estate. £11,000 came from the city and neighbourhood of Sheffield and £3580 from other parts of the country, chiefly through the National Trust. The deeds of the estate were handed over to Prof. Trevelyan by Mrs. Gallimore, honorary secretary of the Longshaw committee.

ON June 24 the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene moved its offices from Chandos Street to Manson House, 26 Portland Place, which has been secured as its permanent home and as a memorial to the late Sir Patrick Manson. With the help of Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, Manson founded the London School of Tropical Medicine in 1897; other countries followed suit and similar institutes have been set up in Hamburg, Amsterdam, Paris, and other centres. It was soon realised that this new knowledge should be co-ordinated, and in 1907 Sir James Cantlie, Dr. Carmichael Low, and others founded the Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, with Sir Patrick Manson as its first president. Though Manson died in 1922, there was no adequate memorial to him, and last year the council of the Society resolved to buy and equip a house which should be known as Manson House in memory of Sir Patrick, and at the same time form a permanent home for the Society. A sum of about £11,000 has been collected and subscribed for this purpose, but a further £17,000 is required to complete the scheme. Any donations, great or small, will be gratefully acknowledged if sent to the president, Manson House, 26 Portland Place, London, W.1.

SIR SIDNEY F. HARMER, formerly Director of the Natural History Departments of the British Museum, has been elected an honorary member of the Société Zoologique de France.

THE South Africa Medal for 1931 of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science has been awarded to Prof. H. B. Fantham, of the Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for his researches on parasitic protozoa, soil protozoa, and heredity. The medal is being presented to Prof. Fantham at the Grahamstown meeting of the Association on July 6.

THE Museums Association will hold its annual conference this year at Plymouth on July 6-11. All meetings of the Association will be held in the Abbey Hall. July 6 will be spent in committee meetings, and the president, Sir Henry Miers, will deliver his presidential address on July 7. The president's address will probably include some indication of a proposed survey of all the museums in the British Empire, to be financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Among the papers to be read are: "A Suggested System of Museum Registration", by Mr. K. de B. Codrington, and "Paper for Museum Labels", by Dr. L. J. Spencer, on July 8; "Taxonomy in the



Museum", by Dr. W. T. Calman, "Present-Day Problems of Provincial Museums", by Mr. H. J. M. Maltby, and "The Preservation of Marine Life, Wet or Dry Specimens", by Dr. E. J. Allen, on July 9; and "Museum Problems in Canada", by Prof. J. H. Iliffe, "A Simple Way to test Museum Value", by Dr. Hay Murray, and "Why do we use Plate-Glass in Museums?" by Mr. Frank Loney, on July 10. All communications concerning the Conference should be addressed to the local honorary secretary, Mr. A. J. Caddie, Museum and Art Gallery and Cottonian Collection, Plymouth.

THE Report of Map Publication and Office Work of the Survey of India for 1929-1930 (Calcutta, 1s. 9d.) is chiefly useful for the detailed index sheets of published maps of India and adjacent countries. Good progress is being made with all the maps. The 'million' map is now practically complete for India, Burma, and adjacent countries. The modern '1-inch' map is making progress, and the modern '¼-inch' covers considerable areas in the most important parts of India. Additions have also been made to several other series.

THE last issue of the League of Nations *Quarterly Bulletin of Information on the Work of International Organisations*, No. 2, vol. 3, April 1931, contains brief reports of some three dozen conferences held and also a list of more than sixty forthcoming conferences to be held during the present year. It is desired to make this register as complete as possible. Information about coming scientific conferences of international importance would be particularly welcome and may be addressed to the Section of International Bureaux, League of Nations, Geneva.

MESSRS. Wheldon and Wesley, Ltd., 2 Arthur Street, W.C.2, have just circulated an important catalogue (New Series, 25) of second-hand works (more than 2000 in number) on entomology and arachnology, including the collection of pamphlets formed by the late W. F. Kirby. The list is obtainable upon application.

A USEFUL catalogue (No. 458) of about 900 second-hand books on philosophy, including many from the library of the late W. E. Johnson, Sidgwick lecturer in moral science in the University of Cambridge, has just been received from Messrs. Bowes and Bowes of Cambridge. Copies can be had from the publishers upon application.

MESSRS. H. K. Lewis and Co., Ltd., have just issued a supplement (1928-1930) to the catalogue of their Medical and Scientific Circulating Library which should be of service not only to users of the library, but also to others who may wish for particulars of books relating to science in its various branches. The supplement is arranged alphabetically, but a classified list of subjects included, with the names of the respective authors, is given at the end. The price to subscribers is 1s. net., to others 2s. net.

APPLICATIONS are invited for the following appointments, on or before the dates mentioned:—An assistant quantity surveyor on the staff of the Miners' Welfare Committee of the Mines Department—The Under-Secretary for Mines, Establishment Branch, Mines Department, Dean Stanley Street, S.W.1 (July 8). A secretary of the Institution of Sanitary Engineers—The Chairman of Council of the Institution of Sanitary Engineers, 120-122 Victoria Street, S.W.1 (July 8). A visiting teacher of science capable of teaching physics and chemistry, hygiene, and some biology in the junior day school of the Smithfield Institute—The Education Officer (T.1), County Hall, S.E.1 (July 10). An assistant in the natural history division, National Museum, Dublin—The Secretary, Civil Service Commission, 45 Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin, C.8 (July 10). A lecturer in mining at the Sunderland Technical College—The Chief Education Officer, Education Office, 15 John Street, Sunderland (July 11). A full-time lecturer in charge of the electrical engineering department of the Chesterfield Technical College—The Principal, Technical College, Chesterfield (July 11). An assistant master at the Bolton Municipal Technical College, to teach mainly science subjects in the junior technical school and engineering departments of the College—The Director of Education, Education Offices, Nelson Square, Bolton (July 11). A librarian of University College, Nottingham—The Registrar, University College, Nottingham (July 13). A principal of the Neath Mining and Technical Institute—The Director of Education, County Hall, Cardiff (July 13). An assistant lecturer in physics at University College, Nottingham—The Registrar, University College, Nottingham (July 13). An assistant organising lecturer at University College, Nottingham, under the Miners' Welfare Adult Education Joint Committee—H. L. Featherstone, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham (July 14). A woman senior demonstrator in pathology at the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women and Royal Free Hospital—The Warden and Secretary, 8 Hunter Street, W.C.1, or the Secretary, Royal Free Hospital, W.C.1 (July 15). A lecturer in zoology at Birkbeck College—The Secretary, Birkbeck College, Fetter Lane, E.C.4 (July 15). A principal of the Harris Institute, Preston—Alderman H. Astley Bell, Harris Institute, Corporation Street, Preston (July 31). A keeper of archaeology in the Liverpool Public Museums—The Town Clerk, Municipal Buildings, Dale Street, Liverpool (Aug. 1). An assistant town planner under the Government of Northern Rhodesia—The Crown Agents for the Colonies, 4 Millbank, S.W.1, quoting M/2748. A lecturer-in-charge of the building department of the Norwich Technical College—The Principal, Technical College, Norwich. Teachers of engineering drawing and mechanical engineering at the East Ham Technical College—The Secretary, Education Office, Town Hall, East Ham, E.6. A teacher of engineering at the Leyton Technical College—The Clerk to the Governors, 280 High Road, Leyton, E.10. A Principal of University College, Leicester—The Registrar, University College, Leicester.



## Letters to the Editor.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, nor to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

## Embryology and the Theory of Polyhedra.

A NEW volume of *Proceedings of the Bologna Mathematical Congress* begins with a short paper by Max Brückner, on the old problem of how many different polyhedra are possible of  $n$  sides—with the limiting condition that all the corners shall be trihedral. In my book on "Growth and Form" I dealt with the kindred problem of the possible number of arrangements of a plane assemblage of cells, their partition-walls all meeting three-by-three, as is actually the case in a system of soap-bubbles or of living cells. The problem of the polyhedra is just as interesting to the biologist; for any natural clump of cells, such as a totally segmented egg or 'morula', may be looked on as a polyhedron and may be studied accordingly.

Eighty years ago, Kirkman showed that the total number of 8-sided (convex, Eulerian) polyhedra, with trihedral corners, was *thirteen*; and Cayley, Steinitz, and others have extended the problem by a few stages. The number of possible arrangements increases rapidly; and now Brückner (whose results I only quote approximately) tells us that, for

$$\begin{array}{cccc} n=13, & 14, & 15, & 16, \text{ the number of} \\ n\text{-sided polyhedra} = & 5 \times 10^4, & 4 \times 10^5, & 3 \times 10^6, & 2.7 \times 10^7. \end{array}$$

An 8-sided polyhedron, or 8-celled egg, may have its sides, or cells, arranged in 13 different ways; there is room for variety, but withal so limited that we must expect to find the same arrangement, or cell-pattern, repeated again and again in the 8-celled stages of divers organisms. But we no sooner come to the 16-celled stage than nearly 30 million arrangements of these sixteen cells are found to be possible. And it becomes plain that the study of 'cell-lineage', or the mapping-out in detail of the cell-arrangements after repeated cell-divisions, is only possible under the severest limitations—if it be possible at all.

D'ARCY W. THOMPSON.

St. Andrews.

Effect of Certain Substances and of Heat on Cells of *Abraxas*.

IN continuation of the work already carried out last year on the effects of phosphorised olive oil on the male germ cells of *Abraxas*, we have investigated material from larvæ injected into distilled water, 2 per cent NaCl in water, phosphoric acid, and phosphorus in paraffin oil. We have also tried various temperatures for several hours.

In many of the preparations, in addition to the cytoplasmic inclusions, the spindle bridges, or parts thereof, swell up and form separate bodies, which are very similar to the abortive acroblasts already described. In material treated with phosphoric acid, heat, 2 per cent NaCl in water, and phosphorised paraffin oil, no very large bodies of the type already described<sup>1</sup> have yet been found. There is at present some doubt as to the actual mode of origin of some of these large elements in the spermatocytes and spermatids of *Abraxas*.

J. BRONTË GATENBY.

JOYCE C. HILL.

Trinity College, Dublin.

<sup>1</sup> Gatenby, J. Brontë, *Jour. Exper. Zool.*, vol. 58; 1931.

## Paramagnetism of Bivalent Silver.

IN collaboration with Mr. F. H. Burstall, one of us has recently prepared a series of silver salts of the type  $[\text{Ag } 3 \text{ dipy}]X_2$  in which dipy represents *aa'*-dipyridyl ( $\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_8\text{N}_2$ ) and  $X$  a univalent anion (*J.C.S.*, 2594; 1930). The complex kation is therefore bivalent.

If this is due to the presence of bivalent silver, then an electron must have been extracted from the inner levels (probably the  $N$  level) of the silver atom, which consequently should be paramagnetic. We have therefore measured by the Gouy method the susceptibility of the chlorate at  $20^\circ$ . Parallel measurements were made in the same apparatus with copper sulphate, since the bivalent copper ion contains a similar incomplete sub-group. The following results were obtained:

Substance.	$\chi$ .	$\chi_M$ .	$p$ .
$\text{CuSO}_4 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}$	$5.86 \times 10^{-6}$	$1457 \times 10^{-6}$	9.2
$[\text{Ag } 3 \text{ dipy}](\text{ClO}_3)_2$	$1.93 \times 10^{-6}$	$1434 \times 10^{-6}$	9.1

The molecular mass susceptibilities of the silver and copper compounds are equal within the limits of the experimental error (5 per cent). The Weiss magneton number  $p$  is calculated on the assumption that the Curie law holds, and no allowance has been made for the diamagnetism of the rest of the molecule. The values are, however, in fair agreement with those found for other atoms in which a sub-group lacks one electron: for example,  $\text{Cu}^+$ , 9.2;  $\text{NO}$ , 9.2;  $\text{VOSO}_4$ ,  $3\frac{1}{2}\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , 8.95;  $\text{V}_2\text{O}_2\text{Cl}_4 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}$  7.94. These values are taken from the International Critical Tables.

G. T. MORGAN.

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Teddington, Middlesex.

Birkbeck College,  
Fetter Lane, E.C.4.

S. SUGDEN.

## Forestry Practice and Research.

THE leader on forestry research in *NATURE* of May 16, and previous letters from Dr. Rayner and Prof. Tansley, would suggest that attempts to grow timber on poor land are in their infancy, and that the work of the Forestry Commission and other State forest departments throughout Europe is being carried on in complete ignorance of fundamental principles. It is fairly evident that no representation of this kind was intended, but at the same time the impression might be conveyed to the casual reader (if such an individual ever reads *NATURE*) that research in connexion with afforestation has been practically ignored. This view may be perfectly correct in certain directions, but I think the practical forester is as fully aware of the value of genuine research as those engaged in any other industry influenced by biological factors. As regards the British forester, whether in the capacity of employer or employee, I scarcely think that he is guilty of the charge advanced by Prof. Tansley. Forest botany and pedology he may have failed to study through lack of opportunity, but in connexion with geographical botany, estate owners throughout the British Isles have carried out most valuable work for practically two centuries in testing exotic species on varying soils and situations. These tests of exotic species have already enabled two or three cubic feet of timber to be grown where only one grew before in connexion with the planting of species like Douglas fir or Sitka spruce, while they have conclusively proved the unsuitability of other species for the British climate, although strongly advocated by enthusiasts.

We know that many of the empirical methods adopted in farming and gardening have been explained,



and in many cases justified, by science; others have been shown as useless or harmful; while in connexion with insects and fungi, invaluable weapons have been placed in the hands of the modern cultivator by science and research. But no one suggests that gardening or farming are industries which should have stood still until science had investigated them in all their aspects. Some years ago the Development Commission, which at that time was in charge of forestry development, adopted the principle that education and research should precede practical operations. Had this policy been adhered to, twenty years might have elapsed before a single plantation had been laid down with the aid of public money, while private planters in every direction had already provided, throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, abundant examples of practical timber growing, good, bad, and indifferent.

The Forestry Commission only came into existence in 1919, and had a definite function to perform, namely, the building up of a timber reserve within a definite period. Had it been able to confine its operations to soils and sites comparable to those which had already carried successful timber crops, the problem, from a technical point of view, would have been comparatively simple. It is no secret, however, that many areas have been acquired which are not likely to fulfil all that was expected of them, and it is on these that the scientific worker might carry out invaluable work if given the opportunity and encouragement.

So far as the practical man is concerned, however, the soil is the raw material upon which he has to work, and it is no exaggeration to say that he knows practically nothing about it other than a few of its more obvious mechanical and physical features. But this does not prevent him from growing cabbages or potatoes satisfactorily. On similar lines the forester plants trees and produces timber which he considers will meet a local or general demand some day or other, but it does not follow from this that he is able to explain how these trees grow, nor can he anticipate the results of his work within exact limits. The man of science may be able to influence him as regards his methods to an appreciable extent, but every cultivator, whether of farm, garden, or forest crops, knows perfectly well that he does many things badly for the simple reason that he cannot do them in any other way under average conditions. Weather and other natural causes over which he has no control frequently dominate the most carefully conducted operation, and unless the latter can be carried out as cheaply as the more rough and ready process to which experience has accustomed him, he is naturally apt to view innovations with suspicion.

In connexion with the branch of research already alluded to, namely, the introduction of exotics from the more temperate parts of the world, several instances might be given to show that experience, when properly interpreted, is the only safe guide in the long run. For example, the success of Weymouth pine in the British Isles (apart from *Peridermium Strobi*) would lead one to suppose that other species growing within the same region would also succeed. Yet *Pinus resinosa*, a useful timber tree in Canada, fails in this country, although associated with Weymouth pine in its native habitat. In Eastern Canada, *Pinus Contorta* is, as its name implies, a scrub pine, while in North-western Europe it grows, in the earlier stages at least, faster than any coniferous species on the poorest type of soil. Many similar examples of this kind could be given, yet probably the scientific worker, basing his conclusions on meteorological data, would give erroneous advice on matters of this kind.

The moral of all this appears to be that practice and science must work side by side, and regard them-

selves within their own spheres as equally important, neither trying to influence the other until the problem at issue is thoroughly understood.

The practical man has no grievance against research workers. On the contrary, he has every reason to welcome them. But it frequently happens that research confines its attention to one particular problem, and is inclined to dogmatise upon it, whereas the industry to which it applies is made up of a complex system of science, practice, economics, and politics which the research worker has no particular reason to consider. Every practical forester recognises the fact that soil and the root functions of the tree growing in it are mysteries which he cannot unravel unaided, and the article in NATURE on May 16 will be welcomed by every unprejudiced worker in the forestry field.

A. C. FORBES.

Dublin, June 15.

### The Age of Flint.

A HUNDRED years have elapsed since Mantell opened the controversy regarding the formation of flint, but hitherto, despite a voluminous literature on the subject, the crucial point, the time of formation, has remained undecided. The main issue has been narrowed down to one of two possibilities: either the flint was formed contemporaneously, by precipitation of silica gels on the sea-floor, or it was formed subsequently to the deposition of the Chalk, by the solution and segregation of silica disseminated through the chalk chiefly from the remains of sponges. The arguments in favour of the rival views are fairly evenly divided, and a strong case can be made out for both contemporaneous and subsequent formation. In fact, almost every observation can be made to fit in equally well with either view; and, like the evidence, so the supporters of the theories, past and present, are evenly divided. An infallible criterion of the age of flint is, therefore, a prime necessity, and the purpose of this note is to suggest one, of which the only remarkable feature is its extreme simplicity. The condition of the sponge remains found in flint is in itself adequate proof that the formation was subsequent.

Siliceous sponges may be divided, according to their behaviour after death, into two classes, namely: (a) those in which the skeleton is composed of separate spicules and which rapidly disintegrate after death, the spicules becoming scattered; and (b), those in which the skeleton consists of a continuous framework, with separate spicules scattered in its meshes. To the latter belong the Lithistida and the Dictyonine Hexactinellida. Judging by experience of hauls of recent sponges from waters of all depths, it is probable that the time taken for the disintegration of those of class a may be from a few months, or less, to a year, seldom more. As to those of class b, although the interstitial spicules may be lost in a few months, or less, the dictyonine framework may persist for years. In fact, it is indestructible except by severe mechanical abrasion or continued action of solvents over a long period of time. Normally, therefore, the Dictyonine Hexactinellida and the Lithistida will stand the greatest chance of preservation where sedimentation is slow, and in any deposit laid down in depths of 100 to 1000 fathoms, where the two classes are approximately equally represented, the higher the rate of deposition the more of class a will be preserved as complete sponges, and the more likelihood of interstitial spicules being found in the skeleton of class b.

The sponge-remains in the English chalk belong predominately to class b; in fact, the number recorded for class a is negligible. Moreover, the interstitial spicules of the former are, practically without ex-



ception, lost. In other words, the sponge remains are precisely those which would be left after a long period of disintegration on the sea-bottom. These remarks apply equally well to remains found in chalk and in flint. Clearly, then, these remains suffered no rapid burial. Had the sponges found in flint been entombed by a fall of silica gel, a few complete and live sponges at least would have been embalmed in the process. It may, indeed, be said that the majority would be intact, and we should have had a large number of class *a* so preserved. Yet despite the numbers of flint nodules which must have been examined in the last century, we have nothing to show of class *a* except for isolated spicules. Nothing could be more decisive.

Frequently, one finds in flint the dictyonine framework of a sponge faintly portrayed in a brown stain, and the connexion between these and similar iron-stained impressions in the surrounding chalk is obvious. The replacement of the original silica by iron oxide must have taken place prior to the formation of the flint, showing clearly that that formation was not only subsequent, but also took place a long time after the burial of the sponge-remains.

There is yet one other factor, which also seems to have been completely overlooked. If flint had been formed by the relatively sudden precipitation of silica from solution, we have to explain why the remains of all forms of contemporary life found in it are so poor. Taking the Rhynie chert of Aberdeenshire as an example, in which remains of plants and animals, many of minute size, are so beautifully preserved, we should expect to find much better preservation of the fossils enclosed in flint. The famous Whittaker's three-inch, representing a continuous bed estimated at some 240 square miles in extent, should have embalmed a perfect representation of contemporary benthos. Yet this, and other flint similarly bedded, fails entirely in this respect.

The story of the formation is even yet far from complete, but that that formation was subsequent to the deposition of the chalk, nobody who has worked extensively at both recent and fossil sponges will deny.

MAURICE BURTON.

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British Museum (Nat. Hist.),  
London, S.W.7.

### Absorption Spectra of Crystals at Low Temperatures as References in the Measurement of Stellar Velocities.

THE vast work of determining and cataloguing radial velocities has made the slitless spectrograph almost indispensable. A number of stars may then be photographed on the same plate at the same time. Such a method is possible only if the starlight passes through some medium which has sharp absorption lines so that the spectrum of each star has within it the absorption lines for references. A medium having sufficiently sharp lines in the proper spectral region does not seem to have been found. I would suggest the use of the crystals of the rare earths maintained at the temperature of liquid nitrogen. Both Dr. Joy, of the Mount Wilson Observatory, and Dr. Shane, of the University of California, have considered in this connexion the absorption spectra of crystals of gadolinium at room temperature.<sup>1</sup> The absorption lines occur, however, in an unfavourable region of the spectrum.

The spectrum of the dysprosium ion appears particularly adapted for the purpose. At room temperature its spectrum taken with a three prism Steinheil spectrograph contains some diffuse lines between 4000 Å. and 4800 Å. At the temperature

of liquid nitrogen, the lines are as sharp as those of gases. The crystal studied was dysprosium ethyl sulphate. It is possible, though not easy, to grow this crystal perfectly clear. A few trials would doubtless discover a more amenable salt of dysprosium. The acetate is probably easy to grow. A crystal about 2 cm. × 2 cm. × 0.5 mm. of another rare earth, cerium, was grown almost as clear as glass by evaporating a saturated solution in a desiccator containing concentrated sulphuric acid. Much larger crystals can be obtained when some precautions are taken as in the method of Freed and Spedding.

Because of its constant boiling point, liquid nitrogen is preferable to liquid air, by means of which it may

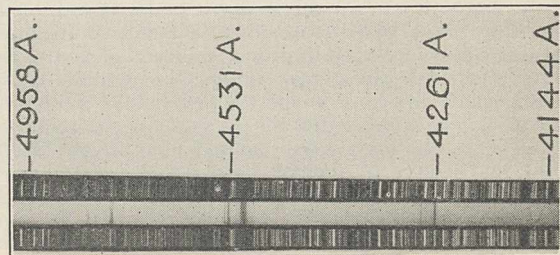


FIG. 1.—Absorption spectrum of dysprosium ethyl sulphate ( $Dy_2(SO_4)_3 \cdot 9H_2O$ ) at the temperature of liquid nitrogen.

readily be prepared. Also, it has the advantage of complete transparency should one desire to immerse the crystals in the refrigerating liquid.

The high cost of dysprosium might induce one to investigate other rare earths. Neodymium has also been found to possess sharp absorption lines in this spectral region, but they are not so fine as those of dysprosium. However, it is not necessary to employ pure salts of dysprosium. It may be desirable, also for spectrographic reasons, to make a mixed crystal with the corresponding colourless lanthanum salt.

No difficulty should be met in eliminating any serious change in temperature of the spectrograph because of the liquid nitrogen.

I wish to express my indebtedness to Mr. G. P. Kuiper, of the Leyden Observatory, for an interesting conversation. The work is one of a number made possible through the generous hospitality of Prof. W. J. de Haas. The Steinheil spectrograph was kindly placed at my disposal by Prof. W. H. Keesom.

SIMON FREED

(Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation).

Cryogenic Laboratory,  
University of Leyden, Holland,  
May 23.

<sup>1</sup> Freed and Spedding, NATURE, 123, 525; 1929: Phys. Rev., 34, 945; 1929.

### Mortality among Plants and its Bearing on Natural Selection.

I HAVE read with great interest the letters from Prof. Salisbury and Dr. J. Phillips which have appeared in NATURE dealing with mortality in plants at different stages of their life histories. The observations are of the greatest importance, but I doubt whether the interpretation advanced by Prof. Salisbury in his letter of May 31, 1930, is supported by the facts. It seems to me that a distinction should be made between mortality and natural selection. The results obtained by Prof. Salisbury with *Silene conica* L. and *Verbascum Thapsus* L. would probably have been very similar if all the seeds in each case had been exactly alike, and, in any case, evolution under natural



conditions is proceeding so slowly that individuals of any one species or variety in a taxonomic sense are very nearly identical. On the other hand, the seed yield of many individual plants runs into thousands and millions, which, combined with the losses between pollen production and germination, makes the chances against survival into the second generation of any single pair of gametes enormous. How far natural selection enters into this enormous mortality can never be known: for while accidental mortality deals equally with the less and the more favourable variation, competition verging on mortality puts a high premium on favourable variations, however small, as, for example, in competition for light or plant food.

With regard to the taxonomic characteristics of adult plants, it can for the moment be fairly assumed that they have been attained as a result of intense natural selection extending over millions of years, in which case little difference between individuals is to be expected, and little scope for progressive selection will exist. Whatever differences exist in the relative fitness of adult stages will be reflected in the seed yield, and I have frequently been struck by the wide variations in seed yield between different individuals of *Capsella Bursa-pastoris*, *Brassica Sinapis*, *Senecio vulgaris*, and *Bromus mollis*. One individual of these species may easily give rise to a hundred times more seed than another, so that even allowing for accidental differences of soil and situation the scope for natural selection in adult stages is fully comparable with that for seedlings.

The whole subject of seed yield, reproduction rate, and frequency of occurrence in plants needs careful study; since in all species a very delicate balance exists between rate of reproduction and mortality, and the slightest change in these should lead to striking changes in frequency in species with short life histories; yet observation shows that this is not the case. Assuming for the moment a habitat occupied by only one species, the number of adult individuals present would probably be very stable for wide differences in seed yield. If, however, *Lolium perenne*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Bellis perennis*, *Taxacum Dens-leonis*, *Ranunculus bulbosus*, and *Carduus lanceolatus* are all present in one pasture, why does not one species drive out all the rest, and why is *Lolium perenne* usually more abundant than *Dactylis glomerata*, and *Ranunculus bulbosus* more common than *Taxacum Dens-leonis*? In raising these questions, and in remembering rare individuals of still rarer species, one is driven to conclude that suitability to a given habitat plays a predominant rôle in the frequency of occurrence of a given species. One single favourable variation, when fully established, ought to have a marked influence on the frequency of a given species comparable with the results obtained by changing the habitat artificially, as, for example, by liming and draining. From the evidence before us, I must tentatively conclude either that nearly all mortality in plants is not progressively selective, or that progressive variations are occurring at such a rate that they are almost completely eliminated before they became established.

R. WEATHERALL.

Eton College, Windsor,  
June 14.

#### The Heat of Dissociation of Fluorine.

THE heat of dissociation of chlorine, bromine, and iodine has been determined by thermal methods by Bodenstein and estimated respectively to be +56.8, +45.2, +35.6 kilo-cal. No data are yet known regarding the heat of dissociation of fluorine.

I have determined this quantity by reversing the

arguments of Franck regarding the absorption spectra of molecules of alkali halogenides. It is well known that the alkali halogenide vapours like NaCl, etc., give a continuous absorption spectrum, the beginning of absorption corresponding to the atomic heat of formation  $R = \text{Na} + \text{Cl} - \text{NaCl}$ .  $R$  is connected with the ordinary heat of reaction  $Q$ .  $\{Q = [\text{Na}] + \frac{1}{2}\text{Cl}_2 - [\text{NaCl}]\}$  by the relation  $R = Q + \frac{1}{2}D_{\text{Cl}_2} + \lambda_{\text{Na}} - \lambda_{\text{NaCl}}$ , where  $D_{\text{Cl}_2}$  is the heat of dissociation of  $\text{Cl}_2$ ;  $\lambda_{\text{Na}}$  is the heat of vaporisation of Na,  $\lambda_{\text{NaCl}}$  is the heat of vaporisation of  $[\text{NaCl}]$  crystals. It is found that if  $\nu_0$  be the frequency of the beginning of absorption, then  $h\nu_0$  corresponds almost exactly to the value of  $R$  calculated as above in the case of ionic compounds.

I took anhydrous NaF and KF and vaporised them within a silica tube placed within the vacuum graphite furnace of this laboratory, and obtained their absorption spectra. For NaF, the absorption became noticeable at  $\lambda 2370$ ; for KF at  $\lambda 2245$ . We can then calculate  $D_{\text{F}_2}$  from the relation  $\frac{1}{2}D_{\text{F}_2} = R - [Q + \lambda_{\text{M}} - \lambda_{\text{MF}}]$  in which  $R$  is calculated from the absorption spectrum data, the other quantities are taken from Landolt and Bornstein's tables. From NaF data, we get  $D_{\text{F}_2} = 78$  kcal., from KF data we get 74 kcal. It appears, therefore, that the heat of dissociation of fluorine is:  $76 \pm 2$  kcal.

I propose to complete the work by performing similar experiments with other alkali fluorides.

MANOHAR S. DESAI.

Physical Laboratory,  
University of Allahabad,  
May 18.

#### Hyperfine Structure in the Rubidium Spectrum.

IN a preliminary note<sup>1</sup> the lines of the rubidium doublet  $1S_{\frac{1}{2}} - 3^2P_{\frac{3}{2}}$  and  $1S_{\frac{1}{2}} - 3^2P_{\frac{1}{2}}$  were stated to possess a doublet hyperfine structure with separation of about  $0.1 \text{ cm.}^{-1}$  and intensity ratio about 2:1. These results were obtained with a Fabry-Perot etalon. Meanwhile the lines have been investigated with a reflecting echelon of high resolving power in order to detect the presence of weak lines due to the less plentiful isotope. A third very much weaker component was observed; the three observed components being at  $0.00$ ,  $0.11$ , and  $0.19 \text{ cm.}^{-1}$ , with ratios 6:3:1. This structure is the same for both lines of the doublet.

The two strong lines are evidently due to the more plentiful isotope Rb 85, and the weak line is due to Rb 87. But as the ratio of the sum of the intensities of lines due to Rb 85 to the sum of those due to Rb 87 must be about 4:1 (the proportion in which the two isotopes are present), Rb 87 must possess an unresolved component of intensity rather greater than 1. This must be obscured by one or other of the Rb 85 lines. It is more probably the stronger line ( $0.00$ ), as this line appears broadened and somewhat asymmetrical.

On this view, Rb 85 possesses a doublet hyperfine structure with separation of  $0.11 \text{ cm.}^{-1}$  and intensity ratio slightly less than 6:3; the probable value of  $i$ , the nuclear spin, being  $3/2$ . Rb 87 also possesses a doublet structure, with separation nearly twice as great, and intensity ratio probably smaller.

It is interesting to note that the lines of the heavier isotope are displaced to the violet. A complete account of this work, with photographs of the fine structure, will appear elsewhere.

D. A. JACKSON.

Clarendon Laboratory,  
Oxford.

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Jackson, NATURE, vol. 127, p. 924; 1931.



**Hail Storm, June 14, at Doncaster.**

AROUND my home at Bessacarr, on the Great North Road, three miles E.S.E. of Doncaster, on June 14, at 5 P.M. B.S.T., heavy rain was followed by hail measuring three-quarters of an inch in diameter, then—after a five-minute interval—by hail measuring one and a quarter inches in diameter—with a density of 85 to the square yard. The duration of the second shower was only one minute. Sound elm twigs a quarter of an inch thick were cut off the trees in thousands. The largest stones weighed 20 grams ( $\frac{3}{4}$  oz.): twenty per cent showed four growth rings about a white spherical nucleus a quarter of an inch in diameter. The intermediate transparent stages were one-eighth of an inch and the final growth three-eighths. None were angular, but a small number showed a quarter of an inch mosaic allotriomorphic crystallisation on their smooth ovoid surfaces.

A sandpit in the garden was temporarily flooded, and in the thin residual layer of mud the stones made excellent impressions. These were covered by waterproof fabric, and next day, after being sun dried, casts of many of these were taken and a reproduction of the surface made in plaster for the Doncaster Museum.

N. L. SILVESTER.

Waterdale, Doncaster,  
June 19.

**An Apparatus for Recording the Ultra-Violet Light of the Sky.**

IN NATURE of June 13, p. 893, Dr. J. R. Ashworth describes a photographic apparatus for recording the ultra-violet light of the sky.

It may be doubted whether such a method can give quantitative results, or even relatively correct results on different days, for the following reasons.

First, a step wedge constructed of a diffusing medium, such as thin tissue paper, does not obey the logarithmic 'law', which is valid only for transparent media.

Secondly, photographic paper can be used as a quantitative instrument only by a null method, if any reasonable degree of accuracy is required, since it does not respond in a regular way to light stimulus. For example, equal values of *It* do not necessarily involve equal response by the photographic paper, owing to the existence of the Schwarzschild effect, while the sensitivity of the paper varies according to the atmospheric conditions.

A method which involves a visual estimate of a small change is also open to criticism, since different people have different acuities.

P. W. CUNLIFFE.

Wool Industries Research Association,  
Torriddon, Headingley, Leeds,  
June 24.

**Records of Actinic Value of Daylight.**

RECORDS of the actinic value of daylight are being regularly taken in connexion with the 'Jeremiah Horrocks' Observatory, Preston. Strips of sensitised paper carried on a rotating drum pass close behind a narrow slit through which light from the sky enters: the apparatus is set up so that the slit opening is fed

with light from an area of the sky 45 degrees square, the centre of the area having an altitude of 45 degrees above the horizon toward the north.

The four records reproduced in Fig. 1 were taken on April 21, 22, 23, and 24 of this year and show the rapid variations of actinic value of diffused daylight. The records are positives, that is, the dark portions indicate absence of actinic light, and the slit width, approximately 0.5 millimetre, provided for an exposure of two minutes.

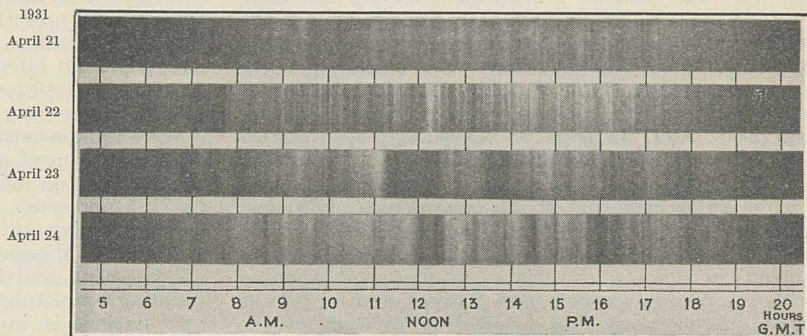


FIG. 1.

Records from three instruments have now been accumulating over a period of many months, and the work is still in progress.

GEO. J. GIBBS.

The 'Jeremiah Horrocks' Observatory,  
Moor Park, Preston,  
June 22.

**Experiments in Prophylaxis.**

THE scope of two agents, which are scarcely recognised in an external field, seems to need inquiry.

Creosote rapidly penetrates the skin: it removes the irritation of insect bites (mosquitoes, bugs, harvest-bugs), and then the circulation soon dissipates the swelling. If applied to eruptions at the incipient stage, it dries them, and the foreign matter is imperceptibly exuded. On tender skin it can be diluted with any grease. Will this be equally successful with bites of plague-fleas? What effect would it have on early pustules of small-pox?

Another external germicide is dry sulphate of quinine, which cannot, like iodine, cause serious injury. On an abrasion or cut of blood-vessels it prevents infection and promotes healing; on a badly infected wound I have known it make an entire cure in a week. Solution of quinine will rapidly cure ophthalmia which is resistant to zinc. The scope of such remedies, especially in the tropics, should be determined, as they can be safely entrusted to the ignorant.

FLINDERS PETRIE.

5 Cannon Place,  
London, N.W.3.

**Crystal Structure of Molybdenum Trioxide: A Correction.**

I REGRET to say there are two errors in my letter on molybdenum trioxide, published in NATURE of Jan. 17. The length *c* should be 3.67 and not 3.57 Å.; and *u* and *v* should be interchanged, making  $u \sim 30^\circ$ ,  $v \sim 36^\circ$ .

NORA WOOSTER.

The Mineralogical Laboratory,  
The Museums, Cambridge,  
May 28.



## Research Items.

**Giant Crescents: a New Stone Age Industry from South Africa.**—Mr. C. van Riet Lowe describes a new stone age industry from South Africa in the *Trans. of the Royal Society of South Africa*, vol. 19, pt. 3. It consists of an assemblage of stone implements hitherto unrecorded from Mazeppa Bay, at the mouth of the Kogha River, halfway between the Great Kei and Bashee rivers on the Transkeian coast of the Cape Province. The implements are all found on the surface, so that there is no actual evidence of date; but their technique suggests a late Middle [Palæolithic] Stone Age. Material, debris, technique, weathering, show that they belong to a single industry practised from Mazeppa to Algoa Bay and as far inland as the south bank of the Orange River, that is over an area of approximately 20,000 sq. miles. This is a new culture. It is a typical blade-industry, including characteristically long blade-like implements, principally more or less isoscelene (acute angled) in shape and variants of these. Associated with the points, scrapers, and gravers, and by far the most characteristic and interesting product of the industry, is a type of implement only one of which had hitherto been found and recorded in the Union. It is an implement shaped like the quarter of an orange. The flat surfaces meet to form a more or less straight cutting-edge, and there is a strongly curved upper surface away from the cutting edge, coarsely flaked and retaining a portion of the original surface untouched in the middle. The implement may be regarded as a giant crescent. The specimen originally described came from the Kasougu River and was unassociated; but similar and finer specimens are now associated with a definite industry, the present collection coming from Mazeppa Bay. The average size for five specimens is 9.65 cm. by 3.35 cm. by 1.73 cm. Probably the industry represents a transition from the Middle to the Later [Palæolithic] Stone Age, and is an integral part of a cultural admixture from a contact between neanthropic and palæanthropic man.

**The Vole Cycle in Britain.**—Continuing his study of the fluctuations of voles (*Microtus*) in Britain, A. D. Middleton gives the results of a further series of trapping experiments (*Jour. Ecol.*, vol. 19, p. 190, 1931). As an accurate index of the numbers of voles present in a district the trapping system has proved to be somewhat unreliable, and recourse has been made to the field observations of local reporters. They show that 1930 was a year of uncertain fluctuations, for while in some areas the numbers definitely increased, in others they increased less markedly or even decreased. In some places, therefore, 1929 was a peak year, and in others 1930 seems to be on the way to ushering in another peak year. The conclusion is that the comparatively regular four-year cycle which the author has previously described for British voles is considerably modified by local conditions, and in some areas may not appear at all. The author states that the regular cycle may be evident, or may be quite obscured, according to the favourable or unfavourable nature of the local conditions. But this assumption of favourable or unfavourable local conditions requires proof; the suggestion which the author's vole map makes, since it is founded on more particular observations than were available before, is that even the four-year cycle is a little uncertain in its rotation.

**Bovine Tuberculosis and the Pasteurisation of Milk.**—The Ministry of Health has issued a memorandum

on bovine tuberculosis in man with special reference to infection by milk (*Reps. on Pub. Health and Med. Subjects*, No. 63, London: H.M. Stationery Office, 6d. net). A large proportion of tuberculous disease in children less than fifteen years of age is caused by the bovine type of the tubercle bacillus, and it is estimated that more than 1000 children less than fifteen years of age die annually in England and Wales from infection of this origin, which is derived mainly from cow's milk. The proportion of milch cows in Great Britain infected with tuberculosis is probably not less than 40 per cent, of which probably between 1 and 2 per cent yield tuberculous milk. But as market milk is usually the mixed milk of several cows, the proportion of samples of milk containing tubercle bacilli varies in different areas from about 5 per cent to 12.5 per cent. Although much may be done by administrative and other measures to diminish bovine tuberculous disease, complete eradication by tuberculin testing and slaughter of reacting animals, the building up of tuberculosis-free herds, and preventive vaccination, is impracticable. Much may be done by the routine clinical examination of cattle, the testing of milk by microscopic and biological methods, and the keeping of the milch cows under hygienic conditions. The campaign in favour of clean raw milk, as by the use of certified and Grade A milks, while of great potential value, has hitherto met with limited success, probably due largely to the increased cost of such milks. So long as this remains the case, the pasteurisation of milk by retaining it at a temperature of 145° C. for 30 minutes constitutes the best safeguard against bovine tuberculosis derived from milk. The opinion is expressed that pasteurisation carried out in a suitable apparatus and under strict scientific control is capable of protecting the consumer from the danger of infection with the tubercle bacillus, and that milk so treated appears to retain its valuable food properties practically unimpaired.

**Biological Research in Hawaii.**—Nos. 6, 7, and 10 of Volume 9 of the *Occasional Papers* of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum (Honolulu, Hawaii, 1930) consist of papers by C. H. Edmundson, "New Hawaiian Medusæ", "Effect of Ultraviolet Rays in Regeneration of Chelipeds", and "New Hawaiian Crustacea"; whilst No. 11 is by C. Montague Cooke, jun., and H. E. Crampton on "New Species of *Partula*". The medusæ dealt with belong to the genus *Eleutheria*, which is characterised by the branched tentacles bearing groups of nematocysts or suckers, or both, and having a brood pouch dorsal to the stomach. Many of these medusæ, like the common British form *Eleutheria dichotoma*, creep about by means of their tentacles. Four species new to science are here recorded from Hawaii, chiefly differing from one another and from previously known members of the genus in the position of the clusters of nematocysts and in the margin of the umbrella. They represent the first creeping medusæ to be recorded from the North Pacific Ocean. A new species of *Kishinouyea*, one of the *Stauromedusæ*, is also described. Amongst the Hawaiian crustacea, new species of *Processa*, *Jousseaumea*, and *Axiopsis* are described, and a new genus of the *Portunidæ*. This new genus *Cælocarcinus*, containing one new species, has very peculiarly modified fifth legs, having the last two joints developed into rounded foliaceous swimming paddles. The gastropod genus *Partula* is always interesting on account of the geographical distribution of the species, which are, as a rule, each characteristic of certain islands or groups of islands. Four new species are here described—*Partula cytherea*



from remote mountain slopes of Tahiti, *Partula lanceolata* from Mango Island in Fiji, 200 to 500 feet, *Partula thurstoni* from Ofu Island, Samoa, and *Partula montana* from the high forest of the Afiamalu region, about 2500 feet, Upolu, Samoa.

**A New Parasitic Copepod.**—Mr. Isokiti Harada in his paper, "A New Copepod Species Parasitic on Formosan Fresh-water Fishes" ("Studies on the Fresh-water Fauna of Formosa": (1) Contributions from the Zoological Laboratory, Taihoku Imperial University, Formosa, Japan. *Journal of the Society of Tropical Agriculture*, 2, 71-76, 1930), describes a new ergasilid, which he names *Ergasilus japonicus*, parasitic on the two fishes from Lake Jitsuetasan, Formosa, *Cultricolus kneri* and *Pseudorasbora parva*. All the species of *Ergasilus* hitherto known live upon the gill filaments or within the gill cavities of their hosts, but this one lives on the outside of the body, especially on the mucous membrane at the base of the fins and occasionally on the outer surface of the operculum. None were found on the gill filaments, gill cavities, or elsewhere on the body surface. The cyprinoid fishes *Pararabosa moltrechti* and *Zacco temminckii* were also found to be parasitised by this species. All those on the fishes were females. The males are free-swimming and were collected on several occasions. Free-swimming females were also observed. *Ergasilus japonicus* differs from the other species of the genus in its habitat as well as in the arrangement of the spines and setae of the legs, in their structure, and in the characteristic flattened swimming plate of the first swimming legs in the female.

**A Liverwort as Pioneer on Burnt Forest Land.**—Marie Liliens Stern has recently attempted to throw some light on the occurrence of *Marchantia polymorpha* as a pioneer plant on burnt-out forest land (*Travaux de la Société des Naturalistes de Léningrad*, vol. 60, livre 3, 1930. Russian with French résumé). Pure culture work shows that *Marchantia* ceases to grow and develops very few gemmæ in the absence of potassium. On the other hand, the cultures show that high concentrations of potassium are not injurious, nor is exposure to guaiacol or pyrogallol acid, which are products of dry distillation of wood and occur in the surface layers of soil in burnt-out forests. *Marchantia* shows a preference for slightly acid conditions, which are also associated with the soil in such localities. It is still a little difficult to gauge the significance of these results without comparative cultures of other liverworts, which do not show any tendency to repopulate burnt forest land. It would be of interest to know whether any similar resistance to relatively high concentrations of potassium and to the presence of distillation products of wood is shown by any of the other plants that one associates with localities where there has been a fire—for example, *Funaria hygrometrica*, *Pyronema confluens*, and *Epilobium angustifolium*.

**Irrigation in India.**—The review of "Irrigation in India" for 1928-29 (Government of India: Public Works Branch, 2s.) gives a statistical and financial summary of the irrigation works in every province of British India. The rainfall in the year under review was on the whole normal, though in the plain areas there was a deficiency of about five per cent, and in the Central Provinces of eleven to twenty-two per cent. The total area irrigated by government works of all kinds was well over thirty million acres, which was nearly three million acres more than in the previous triennium. This total was slightly more than twelve per cent of the total area sown. In Sind it was as high as 90 per cent of the area sown, in the Punjab 30 per

cent, and in Bengal as low as 0.3 per cent. Details of the irrigation scheme in project and works in progress are given.

**Deep Trench on the North Sea Floor.**—In recent surveys of the North Sea the surprising discovery of a trench 130 fathoms deep has been made about 100 miles east of Montrose. The Devil's Pit, as it has been called, is the deepest of a group of depressions found in a floor which was previously supposed to be an undulating plain at 38 to 50 fathoms. Another group of depressions, with a greatest depth of 87 fathoms, occurs farther south, about 65 miles east of Berwick. Prof. J. W. Gregory discusses the nature and significance of these depressions in the *Geographical Journal* for June. He gives reasons for not accepting the suggestion that they have a connexion with the earthquake that was felt in eastern Scotland and southern Norway on January 24, 1927, and he believes that the features are not new but were formerly missed by soundings having been too far apart. Recent soundings in the immediate vicinity of these trenches agree entirely with earlier records of shallow water. Prof. Gregory argues that the trenches are remains of the pre-glacial valley of the Rhine and date from the days when the Rhine and its British tributaries discharged to the North Sea about a hundred miles east of Kinnaird Head. He further points out that the existence of these pre-glacial trenches adds to the improbability of a Scandinavian ice-sheet having reached the British coast, since it would have filled the trenches with moraine matter. In this case floating ice must have been responsible for the transport of Scandinavian boulders to eastern England.

**Long-Range  $\alpha$ -Particles.**—In the June issue of the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, Lord Rutherford, F. A. B. Ward, and W. B. Lewis have described an investigation of the long-range  $\alpha$ -particles from radium C by one of the new methods. Their results are most illuminating, as they show that, in addition to the well-known group with a normal range in air of 9 cm., there are at least eight other homogeneous groups with ranges between 7 cm. and 12 cm. Their numbers are, however, minute; for every million particles of the common 7 cm. group, there are only seventeen of the most frequent of the long-range groups (9 cm.), and between 0.2 and 1.3 of each of the others. No particles of range greater than 12 cm. were found, and if present, there is certainly less than one-tenth of a per cent of the number in the main set of range 9 cm. In discussing these results, it is pointed out that there must be some intimate connexion between the energy of these long-range particles and the energy of the gamma rays emitted by radium C, and the view is taken that the gamma rays arise from a transition of the  $\alpha$ -particle within the nucleus between two different energy-levels. The energies of these levels can be found from the energy of the  $\alpha$ -particles, and it is shown that the differences in energy between these levels and the normal level are in several cases in good accord with the energies of some of the stronger gamma rays.

**Identification of Hydroxylic Compounds.**—Phenyl-carbimide has been employed in separating and characterising phenols from tar and tar products and also forms solid compounds with alcohols which have definite melting points. In some cases it can also be used to isolate several dihydric phenols from the aqueous liquors of low-temperature carbonisation, but with the less volatile phenols only oily products are formed. Morgan and Pettet, in the May number of the *Journal of the Chemical Society*, describe a more



satisfactory alternative reagent, namely *p*-xenylcarbimide, the compounds of which,  $C_6H_5 \cdot C_6H_4 \cdot NH \cdot CO_2R$ , are considerably less fusible than the corresponding phenylcarbarnates, so that phenols which yield only oils with phenylcarbimide provide crystalline *p*-xenyl derivatives and, in addition, solubility relationships are modified. The paper includes a table of melting points of *p*-xenylcarbarnates and phenylcarbarnates, in which compounds formed from several alcohols and phenols appear.

**Syntheses of Ethyl Alcohol.**—In a paper in the June number of the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, on ethyl alcohol as a product of high-pressure syntheses, G. T. Morgan and R. Taylor, after reviewing briefly the conflicting results which have been reported in attempts to prepare this substance from carbon monoxide and hydrogen interacting in the presence of catalysts, describe some new experiments which they have performed yielding positive results. The catalyst most used was prepared from cobalt nitrate and zinc permanganate, and the synthesis carried out at 400° and 200 atmospheres, about 75 c.c. of a composite liquid product being obtained per hour. From about four litres of this, the alcohol was separated and identified conclusively by a number of physical and chemical tests. Two acetals have also been separated from the crude products of the catalysis and identified, the more volatile one being ethylidene dimethyl

ether, and the less volatile one propylidene dimethyl ether. Six other catalysts are described, each of which was found to induce the formation of appreciable quantities of ethyl alcohol.

**Molecular Weight Determinations.**—Rast, in 1922, suggested (without reference to the earlier work of Jouniaux in 1912) the use of fused camphor as a cryoscopic solvent, the novelty claimed being that the molecular depression of freezing point for this substance was so large that ordinary melting-point apparatus could be adapted to a micro-method for the determination of molecular weight. The value of the molecular depression constant for camphor was calculated as 400 by Rast from some results on the melting points of mixtures of salol and camphor obtained by Caille, whereas Jouniaux had obtained the higher value 498 from a study of a number of cooling curves of pure substances dissolved in camphor. In the May number of the *Journal of the Chemical Society*, Le Fèvre and Webb show that Caille's results appear to be erroneous, and that the higher value of the constant is to be preferred. They also show that bornyl chloride is a suitable cryoscopic solvent, having the very high constant of about 500. It has a lower melting point than camphor, and is less volatile. The results given are somewhat erratic and great accuracy is not claimed for them, but the method appears to be capable of development.

### Astronomical Topics.

**Encke's Comet.**—Telegrams from Profs. Shapley and Strömrgren report the detection of this comet by Mr. Bobone at Cordoba (Argentine), on June 21, at 22 h. 23.2 m. U.T. in R.A. 7 h. 35 m. 24s., N. Decl. 8° 22'. The R.A. is 56 s. less and the Decl. 44' less than the values predicted by Matkiewicz; this implies that the time of perihelion is about 18 hours earlier than the predicted value, which was June 3.85 U.T. For most comets this would not be regarded as an unreasonable amount, but this comet has been so carefully studied ever since 1819 that the predictions are usually accurate to an hour. It is too large to be due to Mercury, though a little of it may be due to that planet, if Matkiewicz did not allow for its effect; it was not very far from the comet at the last perihelion passage. Possibly the accelerative effect, which was noted in the last century, but which had nearly died out, has revived again. This is the first detection of a comet for ten months; the cometary nature of the object reported by Prof. Nakamura last November is doubtful.

**Calendar Reform.**—A Circular from the International Fixed Calendar League reports that the preparatory committee on calendar reform at Geneva has completed its report, which will soon be issued; it will form the basis of discussion at the international conference on the subject, which has been convened by the League of Nations to meet on Oct. 26. Nearly all the schemes of reform include the suggestion that one day in each year (two in leap years) should lie outside the sequence of weekdays, so that every year should begin with the same weekday. There is widespread opposition to this plan, and it is scarcely likely to obtain the support necessary for its universal adoption. The schemes for making the lengths of the months follow a more orderly plan are less controversial; but the reformers are fairly equally divided between the 12-months and 13-months division of the year. The advantage of the latter is the equality of all the months, except for the one extra day. Its chief drawback is that it does not divide into quarters. But it has been pointed out

that the case would not be much worse than the present 'quarter-days', which do not all fall on the same day of the month. The discussions next October are likely to be lively.

**Improvement in Time-Recording.**—The great improvement in clocks, effected by Shortt, calls for a similar improvement in chronographs. Those in general use are limited to hundredths of a second. A paper by Alfred L. Loomis in *M.N.R.A.S.* for March gives a description of a very accurate form of chronograph. A broad sheet of paper is made to advance at a uniform speed past a comb of 100 teeth. The records on the paper are made by electric sparks from these teeth; the teeth are in electric connexion with a disc having 100 teeth, which rotates 10 times per second, so that each tooth corresponds to one-thousandth of a second. The results enable very accurate clock determinations to be made. These show that the maximum clock rate is attained when the pressure in the clock case is between 15 mm. and 25 mm. of mercury. Lowering the pressure from 15 mm. to 1 mm. caused the clock to lose a second a day; this unexpected result is due to the longer swing that occurs with low pressure. A paper immediately following this, by Prof. E. Brown and D. Brouwer, gives an analysis of the clock records extending over several months. The most interesting result is the detection of a small effect due to the moon. The theoretical amplitude is shown to be 0.000153 second, the period being half a lunar day. This is the direct action of the moon on the pendulum, but there are also indirect effects due to the change in the earth's attraction arising from tidal deformation. The analysis of the clock readings gave amplitudes varying from 0.000106 s. to 0.000150 s.; they are, therefore, of the right order for lunar effects. It is hoped that continuation of the observations, using four Shortt clocks, will make it possible to detect changes in the rate of the earth's rotation. The irregularities in the apparent motion of the moon and planets give grounds for believing that such changes occur.



## Recent Advances in the Chemistry of the Vitamins.

AT the meeting of the Royal Society held on June 18, the President, Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins, opened a discussion on the chemistry of the vitamins. He said that although many discoveries had been communicated in the past to the Society, there had been very few papers dealing with the vitamins. He felt great satisfaction that this discussion should occur during the first year of his presidency, especially as the subject was still growing in interest. The Society were to be congratulated on the presence of a number of foreign workers, so that the discussion would have an international character. As the subject was so vast, he proposed to limit it to the chemistry of the vitamins, and suggested that vitamins D, A, and the B complex be taken in that order.

## VITAMIN D.

Prof. A. Windaus said that up to the present, investigations had had to be carried out on impure substances and chiefly by means of physical experiments. No stable equilibrium was formed between ergosterol and the products of irradiation. By further irradiation two crystalline substances could be obtained, neither of which could be converted into the other; it appeared therefore that two series of products were formed on irradiation. Reerink and van Wijk had found that no matter whether 10 or 50 per cent of the ergosterol was changed by long wave irradiation, the absorption spectrum of the product was always the same. He suggested that this was due to several substances being formed in constant proportion, and that the absorption spectrum was that of the mixture. None of the products of irradiation are precipitated by digitonin. Failure of precipitation, however, does not imply that a change has taken place in the hydroxyl group. On treatment with phenyl isocyanate the antirachitic activity of the irradiated ergosterol is destroyed. Treatment with warm caustic potash results in the reconversion of the phenyl urethane to vitamin D.

Prof. Windaus had found that the vitamin had the same molecular weight and formula as ergosterol and also contained three double bonds. The dihydro derivative obtained from irradiated ergosterol by treatment with sodium in alcoholic solution was inactive, but it is not certain that it is a derivative of vitamin D itself. The vitamin is more sensitive to a temperature of 180° than ergosterol; after heating, the absorption spectrum shows a band at 2820–2920 Å.

Crude vitamin D is stable in oil, although the absorption spectrum and specific rotation rapidly change. The toxicity of the crude product varies with the potency, but it is still possible that the two properties may be due to different substances. The problem has not yet been solved. He had noticed that in vacuum tubes, in which crude vitamin D had been sealed, crystals appeared, but he had not been able to obtain them in a pure state by recrystallisation from cold acetone or by fractional precipitation. He had found, however, that when irradiated ergosterol was treated with maleic or citraconic anhydride in ethereal solution at room temperature for one to three days, a reaction occurred between certain of the substances present and the anhydride. When these inactive products were removed by solution in dilute caustic potash, crystals could be obtained from the ethereal layer on evaporation of the solvent. The yield was 50 per cent of the crude product, or

60–70 per cent of the material which failed to react with maleic anhydride.

Vitamin D crystallises in long needles of melting point 122°;  $[\alpha]_D^{18} = +136^\circ$  in acetone, and  $[\alpha]_{H_2O}^{18} = +168^\circ$  in acetone.

The crystals show a band in the absorption spectrum at 2650–2700 Å. Their potency was found to be 2–2½ times that of the M.R.C. standard.

He considered that the product obtained by Reerink and van Wijk was different from his, since it had a lower specific rotation and an absorption spectrum of a different shape, but that Bourdillon's crystals were probably the same. He agreed with the suggestion of the latter that there might be several compounds showing vitamin D activity, but considered that his crystals were responsible at any rate for the chief part of it. Vitamin D is an isomer of ergosterol in which there has been a structural rearrangement with an increase in the spatial size of the molecule.

Prof. B. C. P. Jansen said that Reerink and van Wijk had now obtained crystals of a melting point 140°. Their former product with a lower melting point had contained ether of crystallisation.

Dr. R. B. Bourdillon said that the discovery of the method of obtaining crystals of vitamin D by means of maleic anhydride was of outstanding importance and likely to lead to a solution of the problem of its constitution. He and his co-workers had obtained very similar crystals by distillation of irradiated ergosterol in a high vacuum. Their melting point was 123–125°. The specific rotation to the mercury line in alcoholic solution was +250 to +260°. The maximum absorption occurred at 2700 Å. and was greater than that of ergosterol. The potency was 18–22,000 M.R.C. U./mgm., that is approximately the same or slightly less than that shown by Prof. Windaus' crystals. They had been able to prepare an oxalate and acetate and reconvert these back to the original crystals. They had found the rotation and potency to remain constant for some weeks in dry air or in vacuo. Neither by distillation at a temperature of 160° nor by further irradiation with loss of two-thirds of the potency had they been able to separate their crystals into two separate compounds. Moreover, on irradiation the loss of antirachitic activity and the changes in the absorption coefficient and specific rotation were absolutely parallel. They therefore considered that their crystals were a definite chemical compound and had ventured to call it 'Calciferol'. However, the unity of the compound was not absolutely certain, owing to variations in the specific rotation of different preparations. They had recently obtained some crystals with a rotation of +290°. He suggested that there were at least two vitamins, isomorphous and with the same absorption spectra, the laevo form being very unstable, while the dextro form was stable. This suggestion would explain the discrepancies in his own work and that of other observers.

Dr. O. Rosenheim said he considered the work now reported was the most important since the original researches on vitamin D. He thought that Windaus' and Bourdillon's crystals were identical, although it was possible that there might be an impurity present as in Reerink and van Wijk's preparation. Spectroscopic methods had not led to much advance, but success had come from biological and organic chemical research, and especially from Bourdillon's method of fractional condensation. He pointed out that if ergosterol was irradiated until 20 per cent had been changed and the 80 per cent of inactive material



removed, the activity of the residue was only the same as that of the original irradiated material. On distillation of the residue, 20 per cent was obtained as crystals, but the activity was only twice that of the crude product.

#### VITAMIN A.

Prof. H. von Euler said that it was early noticed that fat soluble growth-promoting material was frequently associated with a red or yellow coloration but that the converse was not true. Working with Karrer, he had found that of all red or yellow substances examined, only carotene had vitamin A activity. Carotene was usually supposed to be optically inactive, but he, as well as Rosenheim and Kuhn working independently, had found that it could be fractionated into two forms, one melting at 170° and optically active, and the other melting at 183° and optically inactive. Both forms had growth-promoting power. The latter gave an earlier growth response, but after three weeks the differences between the two disappeared. A dose of 0.003 mg. daily would produce a daily increase in weight of one gram in the rat. Complete hydrogenation of carotene inactivated it, but reduction with aluminium amalgam at first increased the activity. Hydrocarotene containing eight double bonds is much more active than carotene, the daily dose required being only 0.0005 mg. It also gives a higher blue value with the Carr and Price colour test. The absorption spectrum is very similar to that attributed to vitamin A in cod liver oil.

Moore considers that carotene is converted to vitamin A in the body of the rat. Prof. von Euler had tried to effect this conversion *in vitro*, but only with the serum of the hen had he found that carotene could be converted into a substance very similar to vitamin A although not spectroscopically identical. He considered it probable that the transformation occurs in the blood, and that vitamin A may act as a catalyser in oxidation. He had also examined the anti-infective action of carotene and had found that it did not affect hæmolysis *in vitro* nor react with amboceptor, but that when it was given in excess to rabbits, the amboceptor in their blood was increased.

Dr. Rosenheim said that carotene is a mixture which has not yet been completely separated, and that it is dangerous to attribute activity to any particular isomer. The optical activities obtained by different observers vary considerably. It is possible that the transformation of carotene into vitamin A in the body may be only the accumulation of vitamin A present as a contaminant in the carotene. The band in the absorption spectrum of cod liver oil at 3280 Å. may not be due to vitamin A but to a substance accompanying it.

Dr. R. A. Morton said that if the band at 3280 Å. is to be attributed to vitamin A, then the latter cannot be present in carotene as an impurity. Dihydrocarotene is not vitamin A, since the band in its absorption spectrum is at 3170 Å., the blue colour given with antimony trichloride is not the same as that given by the vitamin, and the ratio of blue colour to intensity of absorption is different.

#### VITAMIN B.

Prof. B. C. P. Jansen said that when 100 kgm. of rice polishings were extracted with dilute acid alcohol, 30 kgm. went into solution. By treatment with acid clay it was possible to adsorb nearly all the vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, but only 100 grams of contaminating solid material. The vitamin B<sub>1</sub> present accounted for only 1 per cent

of the adsorbed material. By fractional precipitation with silver nitrate and baryta it was possible to remove impurities at a strongly acid reaction and to precipitate two-thirds of the vitamin at pH 4-7: above this pH impurities were precipitated as well.

Further purification could be effected by precipitation with phosphotungstic acid, and decomposition of the precipitate with baryta, and precipitation with platinum chloride from alcoholic solution. When the platinum was removed with powdered silver, 1.4 gram was obtained, of which 0.4 gram was pure vitamin. By numerous fractionations with acetone from solution in absolute alcohol, 30 mgm. of pure vitamin were obtained. The formula by analysis was C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>10</sub>ON<sub>2</sub>HCl. The process he had devised was therefore very wasteful. It could be improved by the use of Peters' method of fractional precipitation with phosphotungstic acid. Prof. Jansen had found that silicotungstic acid was as suitable. When the original 100 grams obtained by adsorption on acid clay were treated with this reagent, two-thirds of the vitamin were precipitated, but only 20 per cent of the total solid. A further improvement had been effected by Seidell's benzooylation process, which removes impurities. By this method von Ween had obtained 140 mgm. of pure vitamin B<sub>1</sub> from 75 kgm. rice polishings.

Prof. A. Seidell said that Prof. Jansen had had success with a method that had failed in his hands. He had felt that precipitating agents ought to be avoided, and so was led to the method of benzooylation in chloroform solution, which removes a considerable amount of nitrogenous material. He had not succeeded in obtaining crystals, although his purest preparation was nearly as active on rats, but when tested on pigeons by Peters' method the activity was found to be only 1/5 to 1/10 that of the crystals.

Prof. R. A. Peters said that he had hoped to be able to use the animal as a test object only and not concern himself with the physiological side of the problem, but he had found that it was only possible to reach a final conclusion on the chemistry when the physiology was also taken into account. He had been able to confirm Prof. Jansen's process up to the platinum chloride stage. Working with yeast he had obtained purification by removal of inactive material with lead acetate and baryta followed by adsorption of the vitamin by charcoal. By fractional precipitation with phosphotungstic acid at pH 5-7, vitamin B<sub>1</sub> was obtained. Its activity was 0.012 mgm. per dose, while that of Prof. Jansen's crystals in his hands was 0.008 mgm. Both preparations gave the Pauly reaction with the same intensity. Miss Reader had shown that 25-50 per cent of Prof. Jansen's crystals had vitamin B<sub>1</sub> activity. She had now been able to isolate vitamin B<sub>1</sub> from B<sub>2</sub> by fractional adsorption on to charcoal in the earlier stages of the purification, but the separation of B<sub>2</sub> from B<sub>1</sub> was less complete.

Dr. B. C. Guha said that he had been able to separate B<sub>1</sub> from B<sub>2</sub> by electro-dialysis. Vitamin B<sub>1</sub> appeared to be a strong base, while B<sub>2</sub> was a neutral substance.

The President, in summing up the discussion, said that the progress of the last few years should make them optimistic. He expected that we should soon know the constitution of vitamin D. The chemical problems involved were *a priori* difficult, but workers were finding that the compounds were amenable to the methods of organic chemistry. He thanked the visitors from overseas for taking part in the discussion.



### University and Educational Intelligence.

CAMBRIDGE.—Dr. C. E. Tilley, of Emmanuel College, has been elected to the professorship of mineralogy and petrology as from October 1.

LEEDS.—The West Yorkshire Coal Owners' Association has offered the University of Leeds an additional grant of nearly £1300 a year for the purpose of financing a scheme of research into industrial fluctuations and other matters, with special reference to their bearing upon the coal-mining and allied industries. The University Council has gratefully accepted this offer, and the work will be carried out under the direction of Prof. J. H. Jones, head of the Department of Economics. The Mining Department of the University has enjoyed a large measure of support from the West Yorkshire Coal Owners' Association, which for some time past has been making a grant in aid of the Department of £1000 a year. The Association was also one of the largest donors to the appeal issued in 1925, its gift of £25,000 being one of the factors which allowed the Mining Department to be dealt with as the first item in the building scheme. The total of the contributions made by the Association to the University exceeds £40,000.

THE Congress of Universities of the Empire, under the presidency of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, opened in London on July 1. On the first day several educational institutions and medical schools were open for inspection to members of the Congress and there was a special exhibition of educational and cultural films at Bush House. On July 3 the Prince of Wales held a reception and addressed the Congress in the Guildhall. The rest of the time in London was spent in visiting other educational institutions in and around London. On July 6 the Congress proceeds to Edinburgh, where it will remain in session until July 11. On July 7 the Lord Provost of Edinburgh will deliver an address, and in the afternoon there will be a meeting of members of the Universities' Bureau of the British Empire. The Marquess of Linlithgow will address the Congress on July 8, and this will be followed by discussions on the position of the university graduate in commerce and industry, and the standard and conditions of candidature for the degree of Ph.D. in relation to other post-graduate qualifications. The former discussion will be opened by Sir Robert Waley Cohen and the latter by Prof. D. Nichol Smith. On July 9, Lord Meston will give an address and Prof. F. E. Sandbach will open a discussion on the conditions of admission to universities. Later, Prof. W. E. Collinson will open a discussion on the provision of schemes of study leading to general honours degrees. Sir Donald MacAlister, Bart., will address the Congress on July 10. On the same day there will be a discussion on post-graduate study in medicine and surgery in Great Britain, which will be opened by Dr. H. L. Eason, and Sir Thomas Holland will open the last discussion of the Congress on the facilities for overseas students in British universities. Many excursions to places of educational and other interest, also receptions, have been arranged for the entertainment of members.

### Birthdays and Research Centres.

July 6, 1873.—Mr. S. G. BROWN, F.R.S., electrical engineer.

I am at present engaged on gyroscopic problems concerned with the sea, land, and air, which have been placed before me by the British and foreign governments. I am always willing to deal with any problems, and in fact I welcome them.

I am also engaged at the moment with acoustical and sound reproduction apparatus, especially in connexion with talking picture equipments and adaptations.

I am convinced that there are still vast fields to be explored where my reed telephone and microphone sound relay can usefully be employed, and I am working on these. My latest invention is the Microbox pick-up, a gramophone pick-up which can be used without employing valves or high power amplifiers. The only energy required can be derived from an ordinary 6-volt battery, and the pick-up can be used with ordinary or portable gramophones and it replaces the ordinary electrical pick-up.

July 8, 1861.—Sir J. ARTHUR THOMSON, formerly Regius professor of natural history in the University of Aberdeen.

Since I retired from my Aberdeen professorship last autumn, I have been completing, with the help of Miss Isobel Dean, a large memoir on the Alcyonacea of the Siboga Expedition. Before I stop this sort of Linnaean work, to which I have devoted so many years, I should like to follow others in giving a general survey of the evolution of the alcyonarians. Along with my teacher and friend Patrick Geddes, I have just completed a somewhat detailed unconventional outline of general biology. But most of all, I am afraid, I have just been enjoying the luxury of doing nothing.

July 9, 1869.—Dr. J. W. MELLOR, F.R.S., principal of the Pottery Department, North Staffordshire Technical College, Stoke-on-Trent, and Director of Research of the British Refractories Research Association.

In the research laboratories, investigations are being conducted under the auspices of the British Refractories Research Association on the nature and properties of the materials employed in the silicate industries; on the nature of the action of industrial furnaces on refractory materials; and on the manufacture of materials best fitted to resist the destructive agencies in the different types of industrial furnaces.

July 10, 1854.—Dr. GEORGE LINDSAY JOHNSON, ophthalmic surgeon to H.M. Forces in Natal.

I am now engaged in completing a large work which has occupied my attention during my spare moments for upwards of forty years, namely, the comparative anatomy and physiology of the vertebrate eye, embracing nearly all available living families and genera of the mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, with references to the eyes of the birds and fishes. Two abstracts of this work have already been published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society* (1901 and 1904), with more than a hundred illustrations in colour and numerous illustrations in black and white on plates and in the text. I hope to have this work published during the current year. My chief reason why its publication has been delayed is due to the great expense of printing the coloured drawings, of which there are more than three hundred.

The practical utility of this work lies in its affording help towards the classification of the Vertebrata, which in a great many instances requires modification. This is especially the case among the families and genera of the rodents. There are still a few animals' eyes to be examined and depicted which I have hitherto been unable to procure or depict. Finally, the optical problems of refraction and accommodation, especially of amphibian mammals, require to be restudied. I would appeal to my colleagues (especially mathematicians and oculists) to assist me in this latter undertaking.



## Societies and Academies.

LONDON.

Mineralogical Society, June 9.—G. E. L. Carter : On an occurrence of vanadiferous nodules on the coast of South Devon. The author describes an occurrence of vanadiferous nodules in the red marls that underlie the Budleigh Salterton pebble beds on the coast of South Devon. These nodules consist of siliceous and argillaceous material impregnated with vanadium oxide and calcium carbonate. A typical nodule examined at the Imperial Institute showed a roughly concentric structure, ill-defined black shells alternating with shells of light-coloured material. Radiating black bands stood out as ribs on the surface of the nodule. Analyses by Miss Hilda Bennett showed that the black portion of the nodule contained 13.96 per cent of vanadium oxide, estimated as pentoxide. The light-coloured portion of the nodule contained only 1.91 per cent of vanadium oxide, and was relatively richer in calcareous and siliceous matter than the blacker and more vanadiferous portion.—M. H. Hey : Studies on the zeolites. Part 2: Thomsonite (including feroelite) and gonnardite. A chemical, optical, and X-ray study of a considerable number of thomsonite specimens has led to the conclusion that thomsonite and feroelite form a continuous isomorphous series. The true symmetry of thomsonite is shown to be didigonal polar ( $C_{2v}$ ). The unit cell is shown to contain  $(Ca, Na)_6(Al, Si)_{20}O_{40} \cdot 12H_2O$ . The mean refractive index ranges from 1.517 to 1.535, falling with increase in the Si/Al ratio. Apparatus has been designed and applied to measure the vapour pressure of thomsonite at various temperatures and degrees of dehydration, and it appears very probable that a dimorphous high-temperature form exists, the transition being readily reversible. Gonnardite is probably identical with the high-temperature dimorphous form of thomsonite (meta-thomsonite), and is therefore to be regarded as a separate species.—A. Russell : An account of British mineral collectors and dealers in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. A second instalment: John Woodward (1665–1728) and Charles Francis Greville (1749–1809).—L. J. Spencer : Hoba (South-West Africa), the largest known meteorite. The large mass of meteoric iron discovered in 1920 on Hoba West farm, 12 miles west of Grootfontein, measures about  $10 \times 9$  feet on its flat upper surface, and is estimated to weigh 60 metric tons. It belongs to the group of nickel-rich ataxites. Chemical analysis by Mr. M. H. Hey shows iron 83.44 per cent, nickel 16.24 per cent, with small amounts of cobalt, copper, sulphur, phosphorus, and carbon. Photomicrographs ( $\times 820$ ) by Dr. J. M. Robertson show a minute plessite-like structure.—L. J. Spencer : Twelfth list of new mineral names. Since the publication in 1928 of the eleventh list of this series (the first was in 1897), 120 names have been collected from the current literature. In addition to the bibliographical reference, a brief description of the essential characters of the mineral and derivation of the name are given.—J. Drugman : On different habits of fluorite crystals. In fluorite the cube is usually the predominating form. Crystals of other habits—octahedral, rhombic-dodecahedral, and triakis-octahedral—are described. The temperature during the growth of the crystal has perhaps influenced its habit.

EDINBURGH.

Royal Society, June 1.—H. Briggs : The relation between the yield of crude oil and the composition of retortable carbonaceous minerals. Using graphical methods, the author showed that, while on the one hand the yield is connected to the percentage of

volatile hydrocarbons, and on the other hand to the C/H ratio, these relations are too intangible to be of value. A more definite relation exists between the yield and the percentage of volatiles diminished by twice the oxygen percentage—a conclusion leading to the formula  $Y = 0.47(V - 2O)^{\frac{1}{2}}$ , in which  $Y$  is the yield of crude oil in British imperial gallons per ton,  $V$  the percentage of volatile hydrocarbons, and  $O$  the percentage of oxygen in the mineral retorted.—C. H. O'Donoghue : Abnormalities of the vascular system of the Anura. One or more striking abnormalities in the blood vascular systems of forty-two specimens of *Rana temporaria* are described. A consideration of the developmental history of the vessels shows that many abnormalities are due to the retention of larval arrangements, and some due to the failure of a portion of the adult system to develop. For others there appears to be no explanation at present available, as, for example, the absence of a precaval vein on one side accompanied by the development of a transverse anastomosis whereby the precaval drainage is transferred to the other side. Connexions between the visceral arteries and veins and the lung find no explanation in the development of vessels or lungs, but analogous vessels to and from the visceral trunks and the swim bladder are found in some Teleostomi. The abnormalities throw a light on the normal relationships of certain vessels in the adult, and often suggest homologies with those of the generalised elasmobranchs.—G. L. Purser : The early stages of development of the vertebrates. The only growth-centre is the organiser, the position of which, throughout the phylum, is correlated with the apical pole and a meridian of latitude on the egg which depends upon the amount of yolk. Gastrulation is the formation, under the influence of the organiser, of a meristematic ring, by the proliferation of which the primary germ layers are laid down and growth to any length is made possible. There is no concrescence and the origin of the mesoderm is the same throughout the phylum, except for variations in the head. The evolution of yolkier eggs made it necessary for this ring to be split into a yolk and an embryogenic blastopore, which evolve into the edge of blastoderm and primitive streak respectively. In mammals the homology of all primitive streaks makes the derivation of the trophoblast and Rauber's layer or *Träger* from the yolk-laden cells of lower forms essential. Loss of yolk began in correlation with mammary secretion. Blastula-formation within the confining coats of the zygote is impossible, and the slipping of the cells over one another causes the final enclosure of the apical cells by the abapical ones. The true and false amnia are products of the extra-embryonic coelom, which allows the expansion of the life-preserving allantois. The 'doubleness' of the endoderm of the blastocyst is due to the absence of yolk and consequent continued extension of the endoderm from the meristematic ring, first seen in the frog.—Richard Elmhirst : Studies in the Scottish marine fauna: the Crustacea of the sandy and muddy areas of the tidal zone. A study of quantitative samples from various parts of the coast reveals definite specific zoning in the genera *Bathyporeia* and *Corophium*.

PARIS.

Academy of Sciences, May 11.—Jean Pierre Robert : Some properties of  $n$ -metaharmonic functions.—J. Dieudonné : Univalent functions.—Edouard Callandreau : The lines of slip of a pulverent mass.—L. Escande and M. Teissié Solier : The conditions of working of the Pitot tube.—Georges Marboux : An electrical oscillator of low frequency stabilised by a tuning fork. The apparatus described and figured is



closely analogous with the apparatus using piezo-electric quartz. The tuning fork replaces the quartz.—M. Auméras and A. Tamisier: The constitution and stability of two copper-nitrogen complexes.—Dumanois, Mondain-Monval, and Quanquin: The presence of peroxides in the gases from internal combustion motors. An experimental proof of the formation of peroxides and of aldehydes under conditions of working of an ordinary internal combustion engine.

## ROME.

Royal National Academy of the Lincei, Dec. 7.—T. Levi-Civita: Plane sections of a body and orthobaric directrices.—Enea Bortolotti: Specialised differential quadratic forms. Ricca's calculus is shown to be easily extensible to these forms.—F. Conforto: Metric and foundations of absolute differential calculus in a continuous functional space.—Miron Nicolescu: Metaharmonic functions in  $n$  variables.—E. Okhlopkova: Certain problems on the limits of the theory of logarithmic potential. The theory of the functions of the complex variable is applied to the solution of certain problems of the limits of the theory of logarithmic potential for the circle.—V. Hlavaty: The curvature of non-holonomous varieties.—D. Graffi: An observation on the equation of the motion of a body of variable mass.—A. Signorini: The profile of bridge piers. The variation in kinetic energy between a stream disturbed by bridge piers and the non-disturbed stream is found to be independent of the configuration of the profile of the piers.—E. Bossa: Correction to the note on "The Hall effect for the metals, nickel, iron, and copper, in feeble magnetic fields".—Remo de Fazi and Antonio Hemmeler: Reactions between organic and mineral compounds (1). Natural sulphides and certain acyclic compounds. Pyrites yields (1) ferrous and ferric chlorides, ferrous sulphide, sulphur, carbon, and thiophosgene when treated with carbon tetrachloride at 320°-400° or at 450°; (2) ethyl mercaptan and ethyl sulphide respectively with ethyl alcohol and ether at 450°-500°; (3) thioacetic acid, traces of methyl mercaptan, methyl sulphide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulphide, and sulphur with acetic acid at 480°-500°; (4) hydrogen sulphide, carbon and sulphur dioxides, and thioacetic anhydride with acetic anhydride at 450°-480°. Stibine gives carbon disulphide and antimony trichloride when treated with carbon tetrachloride at 300°-325°, and thioacetic anhydride and antimony trichloride when treated with acetyl chloride at 300°-350°.—A. Mazzucchelli: Electrolytic deposition of chromium from ammonium chromo-oxalate.—Carmela Ruiz: Strophomenides of the Permian of the Sosio basin (Palermo).—Constantino Gorini: Acido-proteolytes and thermophiles in the pasteurisation of milk. Experimental results confirm the importance of these organisms in the pasteurisation of milk, and emphasise the necessity of cooling the milk thoroughly immediately after pasteurisation and keeping it cool until it is consumed. Examination for these bacteria furnishes a means of judging of the efficiency of the pasteurisation.—G. Mezzadrolì and E. Vareton: Action of ultra-short electromagnetic waves (2-3 metres) on amylase. These waves exert a favourable effect on the enzymes of seeds, especially on the amylase. When subjected to their action for 30 minutes prior to steeping, barley attains its maximum saccharifying power 0.5-1 day earlier than the untreated control, this period being increased to 2 days if irradiation is continued daily. Moreover, the absolute value of the maximum saccharifying power is increased by as much as 15 per cent.—D. Cattaneo: Observations on the structure of the vitreous.—B. Finzi: Tuberculin and anæstotuberculin.

## VIENNA.

Academy of Sciences, Feb. 12.—E. Haberfelner: Graptolites from the Upper Silurian of the Carnic Alps. Part I. Summit, north side.

Feb. 19.—A. Müller and E. Feld: The thermal decomposition of hydrochloric-1, 6-diamino- $n$ -hexane.—A. Müller and E. Feld: Synthesis of  $\gamma$ -amino- $n$ -capronic acid and of  $\alpha'$ -ethyl- $\alpha$ -pyrrolidine.—E. Tschermak: Some flower anomalies and their mode of inheritance in primulas. Doubling of flowers is common in the plant world, but the formation of a corolla-like calyx, so-called 'calycanthemie', is only known in Primulaceæ and a few other orders. The inheritance of calycanthemie has been studied by crosses between these and normal forms of *Primula acaulis*, *elatior*, and *officinalis*, also by crosses with *P. julice*. In double garden primroses, andrœcium and gynœceum become petaloid, but in double auricula the gynœceum generally remains intact, its doubling concerning the corolla. It is also possible to raise hybrid primulas in which doubling is combined with calycanthemie.—H. V. Graber: Report No. 5 on geological and petrographic researches in the Upper Austrian and Bohemian primitive rocks.—K. Fritsch: Contributions to the knowledge of the Gesneriaceæ. (3) The inflorescence of *Haberlea rhodopensis*.—G. Orban: Radium Institute communication No. 271. Investigations on the natural ionisation of air with the Wilson chamber using alcohol vapour.

Feb. 26.—A. Tornquist: The mineralisation phases of the younger east-alpine ore deposits.—A. Rollett: The course of esterification with mixed anhydrides and mixtures of anhydrides.—H. Lieb and M. Mladenovic: Elemic acid from Manila elemi-resin.—M. Mladenovic and H. Lieb: A new resinic acid from Manila elemi-resin.—F. Hölzl: Hexacyano-cobaltic acid and methyl alcohol.—K. W. F. Kohlrausch: Additive nature of the atomic chemical combining force.—F. Werner and R. Ebner: Results of a zoological expedition to Morocco. Two new forms of fish and several previously undescribed Amphibia and Reptilia.—O. Pongracic: Contributions to the anatomy of the Gesneriaceæ.

March 5.—H. Rebel: The biological significance of societies of larvæ.

March 12.—M. Kohn and S. Fink: On dichlorophenols, trichlorophenols, and their bromination products. Thirty-sixth communication on bromo-phenols.—M. Kohn and L. Steiner: Brominated hydroquinone and toluhydroquinone ether. Thirty-seventh communication.—M. Kohn: Debromination by benzol and aluminium chloride.—G. Orban: Radium Institute communication, No. 272. Researches on the radioactivity of the alkali metals by the cloud track method. No activity was detected with caesium. The  $\beta$ -rays of potassium and rubidium were examined.—A. Schedler and M. Toperczer: First report on the distribution of declination in Austria at the epoch 1930.0. A new magnetic survey was undertaken in 1928, declination, inclination, and horizontal intensity being measured at more than a hundred evenly distributed points. A table of results is added.

## Official Publications Received.

## BRITISH.

Nyasaland Protectorate. Annual Report of the Geological Survey Department for the Year 1930. Pp. 16. (Zomba.)  
The Empire Forestry Handbook, 1931. Edited by Fraser Story. Pp. 189. (London: Empire Forestry Association.) 3s. 6d.  
Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Report of the Food Investigation Board for the Year 1930. Pp. vii+175. (London: H.M. Stationery Office.) 3s. net.



The Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine. Report of the Governing Body, 1931. Pp. 32. (London.)

Transactions of the Institute of Marine Engineers, Incorporated. Session 1930, Vol. 42, May. Pp. 1045-1051 + cxii. (London.)

## FOREIGN.

Bodily Positions in Restful Sleep. By Dr. H. M. Johnson. Pp. 24 (Pittsburgh : Mellon Institute of Industrial Research.)

Spisy Lékařské Fakulty Masarykovy University (Publications de la Faculté de Médecine). Svazek 9, Spis 86-98. Pp. xvi + 16 + 13 + 24 + 11 + 4 + 6 + 4 + 26 + 8 + 8 + 14 + 10 + 8. (Brno : A. Piša.) 30 Kč.

Biologické Spisy vysoké Školy Zvěrolékařské (Biologické Spisy Academiae Veterinariae). Svazek 8, Spis 111-126. Pp. iii + 53 + 23 + 8 + 14 + 15 + 10 + 16 + 20 + 10 + 13 + 43 + 43 + 13 + 13 + 30 + 21. (Brno : A. Piša.)

## CATALOGUES.

Ephedrine B.D.H. Pp. 10. Manganese Butyrate B.D.H. Pp. 7. (London : The British Drug Houses, Ltd.)

A Catalogue of Interesting and Scarce Books. (No. 459.) Pp. 36. (Cambridge : Bows and Bows.)

General Literature and Miscellaneous Subjects. (Catalogue No. 539.) Pp. 100. (London : Francis Edwards, Ltd.)

The Taylor-Hobson Outlook. Vol. 3, No. 19, June. Pp. 173-180. (Leicester and London : Taylor, Taylor and Hobson, Ltd.)

Colour in Photography. Pp. 16. (London : Burroughs Welleome and Co.)

## Diary of Societies.

## FRIDAY, JULY 3.

GEOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION (in Architectural Theatre, University College), at 7.30.—Dr. W. D. Lang: The Inland Lower Lias of Dorset.—Dr. W. F. Whittard: The Geology of the Ordovician and Valentian Rocks of the Shelve Country, Shropshire.

ASSOCIATION OF ECONOMIC BIOLOGISTS (Summer Meeting) (at Farnham House Parasite Laboratory, Farnham Royal).

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE (Study of Disease in Children Section) (at Bath).

## MONDAY, JULY 6.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH, at 4.30.—Presentation to Dr. Nellie B. Eales of Makdougall-Brisbane Prize.—Dr. J. F. V. Phillips, J. D. Scott, and J. Y. Moggridge: Photochemical Measurements of Light-intensity in Two Common Vegetation Types in Tropical Africa, by means of an Improved Eder-Hecht Photometer. (*To be read by title.*)

ROYAL INSTITUTION OF GREAT BRITAIN, at 5.—General Meeting.

## TUESDAY, JULY 7.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE, at 4.30.—Annual General Meeting.

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 8.

BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (Esthetics Section) (at Bedford College), at 5.30.—E. J. Sullivan: The Grotesque in Art.

## CONGRESSES.

## JUNE 29 TO JULY 4.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

Friday, July 3, at 10 A.M. (at Science Museum).—Interdependence of Pure and Applied Science.

Saturday, July 4 (at Oxford).

## JUNE 29 TO JULY 4.

CONGRESS OF NAVAL ARCHITECTS (Institution of Naval Architects and Association Technique Maritime et Aéronautique) (at Paris).

Saturday, July 4.—Papers on—

Shipbuilding.

Marine Engineering.

Civil Aviation.

## JULY 1 TO 4.

CONGRESS OF UNIVERSITIES OF THE EMPIRE (in London).

Friday, July 3, at 11 A.M. (at Guildhall).—Reception, and Address by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (President).

Saturday, July 4.—Visits.

## JULY 6 TO 11 (IN EDINBURGH).

Tuesday, July 7, at 10.30 A.M.—Address by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

Wednesday, July 8, at 10.30 A.M.—Address by the Marquess of Linlithgow.

At 11 A.M.—Sir Robert Waley Cohen and others: Discussion on The University Graduate in Commerce and Industry.

Prof. D. Nicol Smith and others: Discussion on The Standard and the Conditions of Candidature for Ph.D. in relation to other Post-graduate Qualifications.

Thursday, July 9, at 10.30 A.M.—Address by Lord Meston.

At 11 A.M.—Prof. F. E. Sandbach and others: Discussion on Conditions of Admission to Universities and their Effects.

Prof. W. E. Collinson and others: Discussion on The Provision of Schemes of Study leading to General Honours Degrees.

Friday, July 10, at 10.30 A.M.—Address by Sir Donald Macalister, Bart.

At 11 A.M.—Dr. H. L. Eason and others: Discussion on Post-graduate Study in Medicine and Surgery in Great Britain.

Sir Thomas H. Holland and others: Discussion on Facilities for Overseas Students in British Universities.

Saturday, July 11.—Visits.

## JULY 4 TO 11.

ROYAL SANITARY INSTITUTE (at Glasgow).—Subjects for Discussion:—The Role of the Hospital Relative to the Development of Preventive Medicine.

The Proposals of the British Medical Association for a General Medical Service, from the Standpoint of Preventive Medicine, and in Relation to National Health Insurance.

Development of the National Health Insurance Scheme.

Administration of the Local Government Act, 1929.

Eugenic Sterilisation.

Health Certificates before Marriage.

Pregnancy and Tuberculosis.

Maternity and Child Welfare Work.

## JULY 6 TO 11.

CONFERENCE OF MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION (at Plymouth).

Monday, July 6, at 5.15 P.M. and 8 P.M.

Tuesday, July 7, at 10 A.M.—Official Welcome by the Mayor.

At 10.20 A.M.—Sir Henry A. Miers: Presidential Address.

At 11.5 A.M.—Lt.-Col. J. M. Mitchell: Address.

At 11.45 A.M.—Discussion.

At 12 noon.—Councillor J. Bailey: The 1924 and 1931 Loans Acts.

At 3 P.M.—A. J. Caddie: Plymouth Porcelain.

Wednesday, July 8, at 9.30 A.M.—W. G. Constable: The Courtauld Institute of Art.

At 10.15 A.M.—S. C. Kaines Smith: Art Museum Problems.

At 11 A.M.—K. de B. Codrington: A Suggested System of Museum Registration.

At 11.45 A.M.—Dr. I. J. Spencer: Paper for Museum Labels.

At 6 P.M.—Meetings of Regional Federations.

Thursday, July 9, at 9.30 A.M.—Annual Business Meeting.

At 11.30 A.M.—Dr. W. T. Calman: Taxonomy in the Museum.

At 12.15 P.M.—H. J. M. Maltby: Present Day Problems of Provincial Museums.

At 2.30 P.M.—Dr. E. J. Allen: The Preservation of Marine Life, Wet or Dry Specimens.

Friday, July 10, at 9.30 A.M.—Prof. J. H. Iliffe: Museum Problems in Canada.

At 10.15 A.M.—Dr. H. Murray: A Simple Way to Test Museum Value.

At 11.30 A.M.—F. Loney: Why do we use Plate Glass in Museums?

Saturday, July 11.—Excursions.

## JULY 9.

BRITISH ELECTRO-FARMING CONFERENCE (at Royal Agricultural Show, Warwick), at 3.—M. M. Harvey: Electricity on the Farm, including Dairy and Poultry Farming.

## JULY 9 AND 10.

OPHTHALMOLOGICAL CONGRESS (at Oxford).

Thursday, June 9.—Symposium.—L. Paton, Sir Percy Sargent, Dr. H. M. Traquair, N. Dott, and Prof. A. Schüller: The Diagnosis of Intracranial New Growths.

Prof. G. Elliot Smith: The Evolution of the Instruments of Vision (Address).

Friday, June 10.—Dr. Baillart: Tonometry.

P. Adams: An Ophthalmological Mélange (Doyne Memorial Lecture).

J. Craig and Prof. Schüller: Discussion on Penetrating Wounds of the Eye.

## GENERAL MEETING.

## JULY 8 TO 10.

INSTITUTION OF MINING ENGINEERS (at Manchester).

Wednesday, July 8, at 11 A.M. (at College of Technology).

Dr. T. D. Jones and C. E. Morgan: The Candle-powers of Safety-lamps before and after Underground Shifts.

Prof. W. H. McMillan: Comparative Photometric Tests of Miners' Electric Hand Lamps.

Prof. R. V. Wheeler and D. W. Woodhead: The Flame Safety-lamp: The Use of Reflectors.

Discussion on The Problem of Lighting in and about Mines.

At 2.15.—Prof. H. Briggs: History of the Coal-oil Industry.

R. Faulkner: Roof Control in the Arley Seam, No. 1 Pit.

Thursday, July 9, and Friday, July 10.—Visits.

## EXHIBITION.

## JULY 6 TO 25.

EXHIBITION OF CANAANITE AND HYKOS ANTIQUITIES (at University College, London).

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