

The dual character of the problem set before the Commissioners is clear enough in these instructions, but the duality is no longer restricted to the academic field of teaching and examination. The conflicting views of the teacher and of the examiner are but a small part of that problem, the "dualities" of internal and external interests, or of incorporated and non-incorporated colleges, or of academic and technological ideals, are dominated by the still more cogent duality of Metropolitan and Imperial.

The accidental development of an Imperial University under the Metropolitan name can be remedied and utilised in one way alone. The University of London is *de facto* the rough sketch of an Imperial University that should be distinguished by the name "Imperial." The Incorporated Colleges are *de facto* the nucleus of a Metropolitan University that should be distinguished by the name "London."

#### THE FUR-SEALS OF BERING SEA.

WE learn from *The Times* of March 17 that Russia has accepted an invitation from the United States Government to take part in a new Seal Fishing Conference at Washington a few months hence, probably in the spring of 1912, and Sir Edward Grey has announced in the House of Commons that an official invitation addressed to this country is now upon its way. It is generally understood that this invitation will be accepted, and that the Home Government, together with Canada, will take part in a friendly discussion upon this once difficult and contentious subject.

It is now eighteen years ago since the Paris Tribunal of Arbitration gave its ruling, the gist of which was that, while the United States had no rights of property in the seals outside the ordinary three-mile limit, yet that in the special circumstances of the case it was desirable that that legal limit should be set aside and a wider boundary fixed; and as a matter of fact a close time was appointed, and a zone of sixty miles around the Pribyloff Islands was preserved against the operations of the "pelagic sealer." Three years later the question was again raised by a celebrated letter addressed to our Ambassador by Mr. John Sherman; but after inspection of the seal-rookeries by British experts, and a re-discussion of the whole circumstances of the case at Washington, no sufficient reason was found for disturbing the decision of the Tribunal, and the case has since remained *in statu quo*.

During the thirteen or fourteen years that have elapsed since the Washington conference no inspection of the rookeries has taken place by British agents, and but little news concerning their condition has reached this country; but there can be no doubt at all that the herds have greatly deteriorated during these recent years. The American agents declare that the seals are now only one-fourth as many as at the time of the arbitration, when already the diminution had gone far. At the same time, the Canadian sealing fleet has dwindled almost to nothing, and accordingly the responsibility for the recent depletion of the herds must lie on other shoulders than our countrymen's.

It appears that it is now the Japanese who are mainly responsible. As Japan was no party to the Paris Arbitration, the sixty-mile limit has never applied to them, and the Japanese sealers accordingly ply this trade around both the Russian and American islands right up to the three-mile limit, and (if report says truly), even sometimes to the very shore. During the years of the Russo-Japanese war it is said that the Commander Islands were freely pillaged,

and it is certain that nowadays the Japanese fleet—non-existent a dozen years ago—is both large and active. In 1908, it is said by the United States agents that the Japanese fleet consisted of no fewer than thirty schooners, some with as many as sixteen boats, and rumour has it that our own countrymen in British Columbia have attempted to put their vessels under the Japanese flag, so as to evade exclusion from the sixty-mile zone. It is believed that Japan has agreed to take part in the impending conference if Great Britain likewise agrees to participate, and there is thus every reason to hope that an arrangement may be come to by which the destruction shall be arrested, and the herds gradually restored.

#### PROF. JAKOB MAARTEN VAN BEMMELLEN.

IN the death of Prof. van Bemmelen, which took place on March 13, there passes away the oldest member of that singularly distinguished band of chemists and physicists which has had its home at the University of Leyden.

Born on November 3rd, 1830, at Almelo, where his father was head of the Grammar School, Prof. van Bemmelen was in his eighty-first year at the time of his death. His father died in 1830, and the widow moved to Leyden, where her son attended the High School, until he entered the University in 1847. He studied chemistry under the then professor of chemistry and pharmacology, van der Boon Mesch. Van Bemmelen has himself left on record a description of the very primitive laboratory—a single room with wide old-fashioned hearth in the great St. Catherine Inn in Breedestraat, serving as lecture-room and laboratory. There, as he notes, chemical instruction could go no further than the simplest quantitative experiments!

In 1852 van Bemmelen became assistant to Prof. van Kerchoff at Groningen, and it is owing to the fact that the students were mostly interested in pharmacology that his earliest papers were purely pharmacological in character.

Van Bemmelen's life work, his investigation of the colloidal state, came to him when he left Kerchoff to become teacher in the School of Agriculture at Groningen. There he began his analysis of soils, and there also, in 1864, he began to experiment on the "absorption processes in mould," the results of which were not published until 1877, thirteen years later. This delay was due to pressure of other work, largely alien to the young chemist's tastes. In 1858 he had married the daughter of the Rev. Jan Boeke, Baptist minister at Amsterdam, a lady whom the writer remembers as a gracious and kindly hostess at Leyden ten years ago, and the necessity for providing for his home led him to accept with much misgiving the position of director of the High School at Groningen when it was offered in 1864. There he stayed for five years, with little time or opportunity for laboratory work, and, as he himself has recorded in the *Gedenkboek* of the school, much distressed at the slow progress he could make in his studies of absorption. In 1869 he was moved to the High School at Arnheim, where he remained until the final move to Leyden in 1873.

Though the chief work scarcely progressed at all during these years of school administration, they were not wholly barren of scientific work. More than twenty papers were published, all on problems of agricultural chemistry. To this period also belongs what van Bemmelen himself very characteristically called his greatest contribution to chemistry—the discovery of Bakhuis Roozeboom, who came to assist him in soil analysis.