

The Adelaide Meeting of the Australasian Association.

THE seventeenth meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science was held in Adelaide, South Australia, on August 25-30 inclusive.

The number of members who attended the meeting is estimated at 750, and delegates from all the important scientific institutions and societies in Australia and New Zealand were present. The delegates who attended exceeded 100 in number, and these represented at least fifty institutions, including the Australian National Research Council, the New Zealand Institute, the various State Royal Societies, the various universities both of the Commonwealth and of New Zealand, the Federal and State Government Departments, the British Medical Association, the various mining, engineering, and chemical institutes, together with kindred institutions.

The retiring president, Sir George Knibbs, inducted the president for 1924-26, Sir John Monash, on the evening of August 25. The president's inaugural address on "Power Development" attracted widespread attention throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Prof. G. Elliot Smith, of University College, London, attended the meeting, and assisted Section F (Anthropology) in urging the Federal Government to found an Australian chair of anthropology at the University of Sydney. The Association also supported a resolution of the Australian Universities' Conference to establish a chair of forestry at the University of Adelaide.

The presidential addresses to Sections included the following: A (Astronomy, Mathematics, and Physics), Prof. D. M. Y. Sommerville, "The Development of the Ideas of Space and Time"; B (Chemistry), Prof. A. C. D. Rivett, "National Research"; B (Sub-section Pharmacy), Mr. E. F. Gryst, "Pharmaceutical Progress"; C (Geology and Mineralogy), Dr. H. C. Richards, "Volcanic Activity in Queensland"; D (Zoology), Prof. W. E. Agar, "Some Problems of Evolution and Genetics"; E (Geography and History), Capt. J. K. Davis, "Sailing Directions"; F (Ethnology and Anthropology), Mr. H. D. Skinner, "Origin and Relationships of the Material Culture and Decorative Art of the Maoris of New Zealand"; G (Social and Statistical Science), Prof. D. B. Copland, "Monetary Policy and its Reaction upon Australia"; H (Engineering and Architecture), Prof. H. E. Whitfeld, "Efficiency in Modern Life"; I (Sanitary

Science and Hygiene), Dr. J. S. Purdy, "Vitamines and Fruit in Diet"; J (Mental Science and Education), Mr. J. Nangle, "Vocational Guidance"; K (Agriculture and Forestry), Prof. R. D. Watt, "The World's Food Supply"; L (Veterinary Science), Dr. S. Dodd, "Cancer in Domesticated Animals"; M (Botany), Mr. L. Rodway, "Ecologic Conditions of Vegetation in Tasmania."

A general statement was made by the permanent honorary secretary regarding the pressing needs of the Association, inasmuch as it is coming to be seen that science in Australia and New Zealand needs to extend its usefulness, especially in view of the impetus given to the study of Pacific problems by the recent Pan-Pacific Science Congress, and the Food Conservation Congress, held in Australia and Honolulu respectively. This could be accomplished by the Australasian Association acting as co-ordinator of, and spokesman for, the various divergent interests of scientific and technical societies. In other words, the best work could be done apparently by an affiliation of all the scientific institutions with the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, and with the hearty co-operation also of the Australian National Research Council and the New Zealand Institute.

The present machinery of the Australasian Association is too cumbersome for this purpose, and it is found necessary to take a central office in Sydney with an officer in permanent attendance to assist the permanent honorary secretary.

A constitution of few articles is needed with flexible by-laws or regulations to each of the main articles. Continuity of membership is needed, and some permanency also for secretaries of Sections, whereby recommendations to Governments and other authorities might be well considered before presentation.

Perth, Western Australia, was selected as the place of the eighteenth meeting of the Association, the date chosen being August 1926. The president for this meeting will be Sir Thomas R. Lyle. The Government of Western Australia has promised 1200*l.*, mainly towards defraying the cost of the publication of the Proceedings.

The nineteenth meeting will be held at Hobart, Tasmania, in January 1928, with the promise of financial support from the Tasmanian Government.

E. C. ANDREWS.

Preservatives in Food.¹

THE report before us contains an account of the preservatives and colouring matters found in different articles of food, together with the Committee's opinion upon the nature and quantities of these substances which should be permissible, taking into consideration, on one hand, their effect upon the body, and on the other, their efficiency in preserving, or making attractive, the different articles of diet in which they are found. Apart from the main body of the report, a series of appendices gives the names of the witnesses examined, and excerpts from the laws of other countries on the use of preservatives and colouring matters in foods, with details as to those which are permissible and which prohibited: one other appendix will be referred to in more detail below.

The principles which guided the Committee in the

interim report on the use of preservatives in meat, which have already been noticed in these columns (*NATURE*, September 20, p. 448), are emphasised again in the report under consideration. Since the ideal of the consumption of fresh food alone is impracticable of attainment under modern conditions of civilisation, and cold transport or sterilisation by heat may be unsuitable processes in certain cases, the only course open is to use some preservative, and the Committee has devoted considerable attention to the question as to which preservatives are the least likely to be harmful to the individuals consuming them in small quantities, although often over long periods of time, and yet are reasonably efficient in preventing decomposition or other change in the food or drink product. In certain cases, preservatives have a further disadvantage in that their addition may give a sense of false security and encourage slackness in the preparation of the food: in other cases their use seems to have become a habit

¹ Ministry of Health. Final Report of the Departmental Committee on the Use of Preservatives and Colouring Matters in Food. Pp. 84. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1924.) 1s. 6*d.* net.