

and advertisement folders. Such are a few of the lines of work in which British museums of similar size and character cannot compete. This expenditure, however, cannot be regarded as wholly unproductive, for it must certainly attract a large number of subscribing members. In Great Britain most museums are maintained by compulsory imposts, and free gifts of money are harder to come by. Whatever may be the relative advantages or disadvantages, it is certainly creditable to the citizens of the United States that they support so many admirable museums by private generosity.

From the body of the report a few items may be selected as continuing the contrast. Leakage through the roof of the top-lighted halls has been remedied in drastic fashion by coating the 38,500 square feet of skylights with a double thickness of Celotex overlaid with Ruberoid roofing. This has involved a change in the lighting of the halls from daylight to electric light. Making a virtue of necessity, it is claimed that artificial lighting is more suitable for the exhibited material because the illumination is more uniform and avoids the fading effects of sunlight. Since many American museums have long surpassed those in Britain in the use of electric light, we may be sure that some of the "dazzle headlight" effect recently introduced into one of our largest metropolitan museums has been avoided; but we are not so sure about the fading.

A somewhat full account is given of the re-erection of two Mastaba tombs from Egypt. The blocks arrived in 206 cases weighing 96 tons. The lower courses and missing stones have been replaced by cement blocks. The stones are bedded in lead, joined by dowels and metal clamps, and each secured to a bracketed upright steel channel. The ceiling has been raised 18 in. above the walls, and hidden lights are in a trough on the top of the wall. Every

care has been taken to prevent humidity, and the room at the back of the tombs is mechanically ventilated. These and other details are given in the report "in the hope that the information may prove useful to other institutions." The use of terms unfamiliar, at least in Great Britain, and the absence of illustrations will, it is to be feared, frustrate this hope.

A poisoning and storage room, apparently in five sections, for the preservation of perishable material, has been constructed of compressed steel and equipped with storage bins of cedar wood. Formaldehyde candles have been used for poisoning with good success.

Many British provincial museums have long experienced the popularity of a wild flower exhibit, but none of them has attempted to show living and growing wild plants on anything like the scale attempted last year in the Field Museum. The case was a kind of large flower-box, and soon proved so successful that it was replaced by one four times the size, permitting of an approximately ecological grouping, which ranged from sand-dune plants to water plants. During the season about 500 species were shown, with full labels and guide leaflets.

Though not of such interest to the public, the numerous paragraphs revealing what careful attention is paid to storage, unpacking, sorting, and general office equipment will be read with appreciation by all museum curators. Nothing is more difficult to impress upon governors, committees, architects, and providers of funds than the fact that the life of a museum is in its workrooms and workshops, and that in any plans for development the first attention should always be paid to those unseen but indispensable offices. What is a banqueting hall without its kitchen? We can better dispense with the toastmaster than with the cook. F. A. BATHER.

### The Sixth International Conference of Pure and Applied Chemistry.

SOME seventy foreign delegates, representing twenty different countries, attended the conference which was held recently in Bucharest. The decoration of railway stations and of public buildings and the more than generous hospitality provided by private individuals, public officials and organisations throughout the duration of the conference, indicated how important the event was considered in Roumania, and demonstrated the sympathetic attitude of its people towards chemistry.

The actual business of the conference was transacted on June 22-June 25 under the presidency of Sir William Pope, and the other British delegates were Prof. J. C. Drummond and Prof. C. S. Gibson. The prestige of British chemistry can scarcely be said to have been adequately maintained since Denmark, the United States, Spain, France and Italy were each represented by a larger number of delegates than Great Britain. At the opening official reception, H.R.H. the Crown Prince of Roumania was present and, later, representative delegates were entertained by their Majesties the King and Queen at the Royal Palace at Sinaia.

Apart from the work of the special committees which met in the mornings and afternoons, a discussion on "The Nitrogen Problem," in which Prof. F. Giordani of Naples and Prof. D. Staehelin of Bucharest took part, was of special interest in connexion with the natural resources of Roumania. Public lectures were also delivered by Prof. Charles Moureu and Prof. Ernest Fourneau on "Autoxidation and Catalytic Phenomena" and "The Relationships between the Chemical Constitution of Substances and their Physiological Properties" respectively.

At the closing meeting, Prof. Ernst Cohen of Utrecht was unanimously elected president of the Conference in succession to Sir William Pope, who, like his predecessor, Prof. Moureu, has held this important office during three years. Mr. Jean Gérard was re-elected secretary and the following were appointed vice-presidents for the ensuing year: Profs. Bertrand (France), Minovici (Roumania), Nasini (Italy), Norris (America), Pictet (Switzerland) and Swarts (Belgium). The invitation from the United States to hold the next conference in Washington in September 1926, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the American Chemical Society, was cordially accepted.

An unique opportunity of seeing something of the enormous natural resources of Roumania was afforded to the delegates by the visits to the factories at Medias and Dicosanmartin, where natural methane is used not only as a source of heat and power, but also for the production of cyanamide. At the present time, the economic development is in its infancy, and there are still great possibilities for the scientific exploitation of methane of 99 per cent. purity issuing from the earth at a pressure of 20 to 30 atmospheres. The oil refinery of the Steaua Romana Company and the famous salt mines at Slanic were also inspected, and at all these places the same kindness and hospitality were freely extended to the delegates.

The Bucharest conference was a model of efficient organisation, and Prof. Minovici and his committee have earned the sincere thanks of those privileged to attend and to join in the excursion to Constantinople, which was a *grand finale* to a most wonderful experience. C. S. GIBSON.