that the results are consistent with the appearance of *H* and *K* and slightly weaker *D* lines in stars distant 500-1000 parsecs. If the light passes through a nebulous condensation, the required distance is reduced.

These results are compared with the phenomenon of 'fixed' sodium and calcium lines which, according to Plaskett's investigation, must be ascribed to an interstellar cloud. Arguments associating the phenomenon with the stimulation or emission of matter from the star showing the lines appear to be untenable. It is considered that absorption occurs evenly along light-tracks; but it is recognised that limitation to stars of type earlier than B3 is not very satisfactorily explained. In most stars of later type (where fixed lines are not marked by stellar lines) the absence may be ascribed to insufficient distance.

The dimming of distant stars by interstellar gas would be caused chiefly by electron scattering, but this is insufficient to produce observable effects. It is considered that the absence of any reddening of distant stars is no evidence of the transparency of space. It is impossible on the present theory to explain obscuration of stars by dark nebulæ, and the question arises whether we must not admit that these contain non-gaseous (meteoric) matter, in order to account for their opacity.

The accretion of mass by stars moving through the interstellar medium must in general be very much less than loss of mass by radiation, so that there is no appreciable effect on the rate of stellar evolution. It is suggested, however, that there will be sharp differentiation of those stars which have velocities less than the velocity of sound (about 4 km. per sec.). Possibly these may reach a steady mass—a speculation bearing on the association of the B type of spectrum with unusually low velocity and with condensations of interstellar gas.

## Research on the Fauna of Malaysia.

THE periodical *Treubia*, the organ of the scientific institutes centred at Buitenzorg, Java, is now in its eighth volume, and it functions as the chief medium for the publication of researches specially concerned with the Malayan fauna. It is issued at no fixed dates and each completed volume comprises four parts. In the recent numbers of that journal are various papers of interest to students of zoogeography, and to specialists in taxonomy.

Dr. H. C. Delsman, in collaboration with Dr. J. E. de Man (in vol. 6, liv. 3-4), provides a well-illustrated account of certain edible crabs obtainable in the Batavia fish-market under the Malayan name of *radjungans*. The commonest species is *Neptunus pelagicus* (L.), which meets with a ready demand among native consumers. It is identical with the "blue swimming crab" of Australia, which is the chief edible crab in the Sydney markets. The species is very widely distributed, occurring continuously from the Red Sea, through the Indian and Pacific Oceans, to Japan. Its presence at Port Said is remarkable and is probably due to the cutting of the Suez Canal. Although this crab is the dominant saleable species in Batavia, there are a number of other species that are sold in smaller numbers. These have been submitted to Dr. de Man in Holland for examination. Among them, *Neptunus sanguinolentus* (Herbst) also occurs around the Hawaiian Islands in abundance; *Charybdis cruciata* (Herbst), with the cruciform mark on its carapace, has been suggested as the crab mentioned in the story, by old writers, connected with the legend of St. Xavier and the crucifix; *Podopthalmus vigil* (Fabr.) differs from all other Indo-Pacific swimming crabs by its enormously elongated eye-stalks, which together occupy the whole width of the carapace.

Other papers in the same volume are chiefly concerned with insects, and of these, one of the most interesting is by Mr. Oscar John on termites. This contribution is wider in its scope than the others, since it deals with species from Ceylon, the Malaya Peninsula, and the islands of Java, Sumatra, etc. Included in this article is a discussion of post-embryonic development and caste differentiation among such insects. Most of the species belong to the family Termitidæ, and, of these, the economy of *Macrotermes carbonarius* Hag. is very fully illustrated. Of special interest are photographs of the queen surrounded by her attendant workers in the royal cell, which strongly recalls Escherich's well-known figure of the same feature in *Termes bellicosus*.

Vol. 7, liv. 2 is devoted to reports on various orders of animals, mainly insects, found in the island of Buru. Mr. J. K. de Jong of Amsterdam deals with the reptiles. Twenty-seven species are mentioned, two of which are believed to be new. The papers on insects deal with a number of families of Coleoptera by various authorities: Diptera Nematocera are described by Mr. F. W. Edwards of the British Museum, and Dr. H. H. Karny of the Buitenzorg Museum has an extensive paper on the long-horned grasshoppers (Tettigoniidæ) found in the island. Vol. 8, liv. 1-2, is given up to a long memoir by Graf. Hermann Vitzthum of Munich on Malayan Acari, illustrated by more than 100 figures. About one-half the species enumerated are new, and both parasitic and free-living forms are dealt with.

## The Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge.

THE inauguration of the Polar Research Institute, founded at Cambridge in memory of the late Captain Robert Falcon Scott, took place on Saturday, May 22. The proceedings were somewhat modified by the recent industrial upset, which prevented Dr. Nansen and a group of other eminent foreign explorers from attending, so that a lecture on the "Aims of Polar Exploration", by Dr. Nansen, had to be abandoned. However, on the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. A. C. Seward, a party of some thirty non-residents, of whom more than twenty had crossed one of the polar circles, joined a number of residents at a dinner given by him, and most of the guests were able to visit the Institute in its temporary quarters during the afternoon. Amongst those present at the dinner were Mrs. Hilton Young (Lady Scott), Admiral Sir George Egerton, Rear-Admiral Skelton, Sir J. J. Thomson, Sir Charles Walston, Sir William Hardy, Sir Geoffrey Butler, and representatives of all the important British Antarctic Expeditions.

At the dinner the Vice-Chancellor, in welcoming the guests, spoke of the honour done to the University of Cambridge by the trustees of the Scott Memorial Fund in handing over to it the care of the Institute and an endowment of nearly 12,000*l*.

Sir T. W. Edgeworth David, in returning thanks

on behalf of the guests, spoke of the scarcely touched resources of the polar regions, and of the scientific problems the clues of which are to be found there and nowhere else. He referred also in glowing terms to the man whose name the Institute commemorated, and to his companions. The wonderful sketches of Dr. E. A. Wilson were especially remarked upon, of which some were on view in the Institute in the afternoon.

The toast of the Institute was proposed by Commander Hilton Young and responded to by the Director (Mr. Frank Debenham). Commander Hilton Young pointed out that the Institute now inaugurated should be not only a worthy memorial of the great deeds of the past but also a source of inspiration for the future. The generosity of the Scott Memorial Fund trustees enabled the University to begin the work of the Institute, but in order to erect a building for its accommodation a further 10,000*l.* is required. There must be many who would wish to do honour to the name of Captain Scott and assist in further research in the polar regions.

The Director outlined the means by which the committee of management, consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. H. R. Mill, Mr. R. E. Priestley, Mr. J. M. Wordie, and himself, hoped to realise the aim of the Institute in assisting polar research. They had seen during the afternoon the nucleus of the collections of books, maps, and polar travelling gear which would gradually become a comprehensive library and museum—a source of information for those who were undertaking research in polar matters, whether by exploration itself or by more academic means. The past discontinuity in polar research was largely due to the fact that the results and experience of one expedition were sometimes not published and were dispersed, so that later expeditions were unable to profit thereby. The Director invited the deposit of original records and technical gear so that such gaps might be bridged. The pictorial side of polar research was not neglected, especially in the pictures of the Franklin Search Expedition, presented by Dr. F. H. H. Guillemard, those of the 1895 expedition, presented by Mrs. Kriel (Lady Markham), and the fine collection of enlargements of the *Terra Nova* Expedition, the gift of the photographic artist, Mr. H. G. Ponting. The building the committee had in mind to construct when funds permitted would contain provision for the rapidly increasing library, the practical museum, and research rooms, to be used by any one discussing the polar regions, whether working up field observations or preparing to go to make them. In expressing his regret at the absence of many eminent foreign explorers from the gathering, the Director emphasised the international character of polar research, and expressed the hope that there would always be close co-operation between those in charge of the Institute and its well-wishers in other countries.

## University and Educational Intelligence.

CAMBRIDGE.—The University has returned to work and with the postponed examinations looming large upon the horizon, the majority of people are looking anxious. This anxiety is in many cases intensified by the fact that some of the tests will now take place within the period allotted to social functions.

The Committee which is engaged in making offers of lectureships and demonstratorships to those entitled to them under the new statutes has presented an interim report dealing with the principles on which it is working. In general, lecturers are being offered a basic salary (for a basic amount of work) of 200*l.* rising to 250*l.* and 300*l.* after three and ten years' service respectively. Demonstrators are being offered 150*l.*; in each case a fellowship allowance is to be made to such persons holding these appointments as are not fellows of colleges. A list of those to whom offers have already been made is published, from which it appears that almost all those who have been called demonstrators in the past will now be termed lecturers. In point of fact they have, in the vast majority of cases, been carrying out the duties of lecturers for a long time; they will now have an official title corresponding to their actual work, but it is doubtful whether they will receive the seniority to which they are entitled.

Mr. J. Gray, fellow of King's College, has been appointed University lecturer in experimental zoology. Mr. Gray has been engaged on cytological research since the War.

EDINBURGH.—The Curators of the University of Edinburgh have appointed Prof. A. J. Clark, at present professor of pharmacology and dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University College, London, to be professor of materia medica in succession to the late Prof. A. R. Cushny, who died on February 25.

LONDON.—The site of 11½ acres behind the British Museum, purchased by the Government for the University of London, has been re-sold to the vendor, the Duke of Bedford, under the terms of the conveyance, which provided that if the site could not be used for the proposed purpose in five years, the vendor should be given the option to re-purchase. The announcement has made a painful impression in the University and cannot fail to have an important bearing on future developments.

Convocation on May 11 adopted three resolutions adverse to the recommendations of the Departmental Committee of the Board of Education. These declared that the creation of a Council to control the finance of the University would have "prejudicial effects" upon the University, that the reconstitution of the Senate would be "a grave error," and that necessary modifications of the constitution of the University should be formulated by the Senate and not by a Statutory Commission. It should be added that the meeting was sparsely attended owing to the general strike, and that the terms of the resolutions, though recommended by the standing committee, were not previously circulated. The suggestion that the question should be considered at an adjourned meeting, or that an extraordinary meeting of Convocation should be convened, was not, however, supported. The opposition which the Senate is offering to the report of the Departmental Committee is centred mainly on the status of the proposed Council. A large majority of the members of the Senate would prefer that the Council should be a statutory finance committee of the Senate with a prescribed constitution. A Committee has been appointed by the Senate to draw up suggestions for an agreed reconstitution.

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A LIMITED number of seed analysts will be admitted to the fifth course of training to be held this summer at the Official Seed Testing Station, Cambridge, on June 21-July 20, on the following conditions. Applicants must be (*a*) nominated by seed firms; (*b*) recommended by universities, agricultural colleges, and institutions; or (*c*) approved by the Council of the Institute. The examination following the course is also open to approved practical seed analysts. Applications must reach the Secretary, National Institute