

is a definite maximum in the afternoon, with a minimum between 9 and 10 in the morning, typical of inland stations, and a subsidiary maximum of midnight. At Southport, the early morning maximum usually found at coast stations is well marked, while there is a subsidiary maximum in

the late afternoon. As recording rain-gauges are comparatively rare, and as the generalisations set out in the diagram alone involve more than half a million tabulations, it is not surprising that the complete story of the diurnal variation of rainfall has not yet been written.

### Obituary.

PROF. ANTONIO ABETTI.

ON Feb. 20 there passed away at Arcetri, Florence, aged eighty-two years, after a short illness, Prof. Antonio Abetti, the *doyen* of Italian astronomers. Born at Gorizia, in Frioul, in 1846, he took his degree in mathematics at the University of Padua in 1867, and at once entered the astronomical observatory of that city, rendered famous, like that of Pisa and Florence, by Galileo Galilei. As assistant to Prof. Santini, then director, he was one of the Italian astronomical party of 1874 for observing the transit of Venus in India. After Santini's death, he collaborated at Padua with Prof. Lorenzoni and went to Florence in 1893 as director of the Arcetri Observatory, the reorganisation of which, begun by Donati, he completed, raising it, as the Institute of Astrophysics, to one of the most important in Italy. He remounted Amici's famous equatorial and did important work in the study of the minor planets or asteroids, on which he published numerous papers.

On reaching the age limit in 1921, Abetti retired and was succeeded by his son, Prof. Giorgio Abetti, who, trained at Arcetri and under Prof. G. E. Hale at the Mount Wilson Observatory, California, installed at Arcetri the 'Galilei Sun Tower' as an Italian replica of the Mount Wilson Tower. The Arcetri Astrophysical Tower and Institute were

described by the present writer in *Engineering* of April 30, 1926. Prof. Antonio Abetti kept up his interest in the institute until a few days before his death. In 1901 he delivered at the opening of the Royal University of Florence an important inaugural address on "Galileo in Arcetri." His son and successor, Prof. Giorgio Abetti, was a member of the astrophysical section of the De Filippi Expedition, 1913-14, to Trans-Himalaya, the Karakoram, and Chinese Turkestan.

C. DU RICHE PRELLER.

WE regret to announce the following deaths :

Prof. Launcelot Harrison, Challis professor of zoology in the University of Sydney since 1922 and president of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, on Feb. 20.

M. Félix Henneguy, professor of comparative embryology at the Collège de France, Paris, since 1900, and president for five years of the Société de Biologie, aged seventy-seven years.

Dr. J. M. Hulth, principal librarian of the Royal University Library, Upsala, known for his "Bibliographia Linnæana," of which the first volume was published in 1907, on Mar. 29, aged sixty-two years.

Mr. G. P. Miln, for more than forty years honorary secretary of the Chester Society of Natural Science, Literature, and Art, and a trustee of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, on Feb. 14, aged sixty-six years.

### News and Views.

THE announcement in the House of Lords on Mar. 29 of the names of the committee on motor spirit containing lead tetraethyl will doubtless serve to quiet somewhat the public controversy over the possible dangers of this spirit. The committee includes distinguished representatives from the fields of medicine, physiology, and chemistry, whose names and reputations are such as to carry the greatest possible weight with the public. The report of the committee will be awaited with interest and confidence. The following are the terms of reference: "To inquire into the possible dangers to health resulting from the use of motor spirit containing lead tetraethyl or similar lead-containing compounds, and to report what precautions, if any, are desirable for the protection of the public or of individuals in connection with the use or handling of such motor spirit."

It is a matter of regret that in the discussion of ethyl petrol, both in the Press and in the House of Lords, incorrect and misleading statements have been issued through lack of correct information. Thus such statements that the *use* of the spirit (instead of

sale) is prohibited in New York City and in the Holland Tunnel under the Hudson River are entirely incorrect; while the reference to deaths by poisoning with lead tetraethyl in the United States in 1924 are misleading, since these fatalities occurred in the experimental manufacture of lead tetraethyl and had nothing to do with the use of the substance in motor spirit. On the contrary, there was read in the House of Lords a letter from the Surgeon General of the United States to the British Ministry of Health, stating that "notwithstanding the late publicity given to the investigations and the general use of the substance all over the United States and Canada, no instance of lead poisoning has been reported in the lay or medical press or to any of our Federal or State Authorities." Final decision, of course, rests with the Government committee, but while awaiting its report, it would appear that the above letter should at least lessen the fears of the extreme alarmists.

A COMMITTEE including the names of the leading physiologists of Great Britain, and also two from the United States, has been formed to issue an appeal for funds to commemorate the work of those great