

Royal Society Elections

AT the meeting of the Royal Society on June 25 it is proposed to elect Sir Thomas Middleton as a fellow under Statute 12, which provides for the election of persons who "either have rendered conspicuous service in the cause of science, or are such that their election would be of signal benefit to the Society". The following foreign members will also be elected: Prof. Sigmund Freud, Vienna; Prof. Ludwig Jost, Heidelberg; Dr. F. A. Vening Meinesz, Utrecht; and Prof. Hermann Weyl, Princeton.

Prof. H. E. Armstrong: Doyen of the Royal Society

WE are glad to have the opportunity of printing the following letter received by Prof. H. E. Armstrong from the president of the Royal Society:

"Dear Professor Armstrong,

"In the name of the Officers and Council of the Royal Society, and in my own, I send you hearty congratulations on your completion of sixty years in the Society's Fellowship and wish you continued health and activity in the years to come.

"Yours sincerely,

"W. H. Bragg, President R.S."

To the Royal Society's greetings we add our own to one who has long been a stimulating—and often provocative—contributor to our columns, and by his teaching and sympathetic guidance, has inspired several generations of students of various branches of chemistry. It may be recalled that on the occasion of Prof. Armstrong's golden wedding, a number of friends and old students presented to him a striking portrait by Mr. T. C. Dugdale, a photograph of which was reproduced in *NATURE* of September 10, 1927 (p. 379). Prof. Armstrong is the senior fellow of the Royal Society, having been elected in 1876; next in years of service come Sir James Crichton-Browne, elected 1883, and Sir J. J. Thomson, elected 1884. His fellowship of the Chemical Society, of which he was president so long ago as 1893–95, goes back even further, namely, to 1870. Scientific workers everywhere will wish to congratulate Prof. Armstrong on the accomplishment of so many years of fruitful activity.

Sir Robert Mond and Industrial Chemistry

SIR ROBERT MOND has been elected president of the Société de Chimie Industrielle of France. Sir Robert, who was recently awarded the Messel Medal of the Society of Chemical Industry in Great Britain, is to deliver his medal address, on "Works as I have seen them grow", during the annual meeting of the Society in Liverpool on July 6–10. He has been, and still is, associated with a number of important firms in the chemical industry. A great deal of his original work has been in connexion with electro-chemical processes and industrial chemistry, and he was at one time associated in his work with Lord Kelvin. The Messel Medal of the Society of Chemical Industry is awarded every alternate year to a scientific worker who has attained eminence in applied chemistry.

Nova Lacertæ 1936

A NOVA of the third magnitude was discovered on the night of June 18–19 by Dr. Nielsen, of Aarhus, Denmark, who happened at the time to be one of a party of astronomers on board the P. and O. steamer *Strathaird* which was going to view the total eclipse of June 19 from a station off the coast of Greece. The nova was observed through cloud in England on the night of June 19–20; estimates of the magnitude were difficult to make on account of the cloud, but the star was probably not brighter than the second magnitude. The spectrum was photographed at Greenwich and found to be of *F* type with strong absorption lines and weak emission bands, recalling the spectrum of Nova Herculis 1934 on December 23, 1934. Unfortunately, the weather has not been favourable for observations in and about London as we go to press, but according to Dr. Steavenson the nova is already decreasing in brightness. An accurate position was obtained at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, with Airy's transit circle on the morning of June 21 by Mr. Symms, who estimated a magnitude of 3.0 m. The apparent position referred to the equinox of date (June 21, 1936) is R.A. $22^{\text{h}}13^{\text{m}}22.5^{\text{s}}$, Dec. $+55^{\circ}17'51''$. The nova may still be a naked-eye object for a few nights to come: since it is so far north, it is visible throughout these short nights, although the meridian transit takes place in the early morning. The nova should be identified readily as follows. Half-way between the constellation of Cassiopeia and the conspicuous figure of Cygnus is an equilateral triangle of stars formed by δ Cephei, ζ Cephei and the nova; half-way between the nova (the southernmost of the three) and ζ Cephei is a centre star, ε Cephei.

Louis Pasteur Film

THE Louis Pasteur film, of which a gala first night exhibition took place at the New Gallery Kinema, Regent Street, London, on Monday, June 22, in aid of St. Peter's Hospital, Covent Garden, was in more than one sense a remarkable event. The title role was taken by Mr. Paul Muni, who had obviously made a careful study of the great French savant in all his strength and weakness. Not only were his passionate ardour in research, dauntless courage in facing opposition and sympathy for human suffering admirably portrayed, but also his abruptness, outbursts of temper, and fits of despondency. It is, therefore, all the more regrettable that the film should contain many historical errors. We are shown, for example, Napoleon III, who in actual fact always took a warm interest in Pasteur's investigations, forbidding him to continue his researches on anthrax and to recant what he had already written on the subject, whereas his work on anthrax was not commenced until after the Emperor's death. Lister is represented as making a special journey to France to witness the results of Pasteur's inoculation of sheep against anthrax in 1881, whereas these two great men did not meet until 1892, when Lister represented the Royal Society at the ceremony held at the Sorbonne in honour of Pasteur's seventieth

birthday. Another objectionable feature is that we are shown Pasteur hurrying from one doctor's house to another on a rainy night to find an accoucheur for his daughter, the wife of one of his former opponents, and after a prolonged and fruitless search at last persuading the president of the Académie de Médecine, his chief antagonist, to carry out the confinement under antiseptic precautions. The doctor's consent, however, was only obtained on the condition that Pasteur signed a document to be published in the medical press that his researches in rabies had been a failure.

THE film, therefore, scarcely deserves the high praise given it by certain writers in the daily Press obviously unfamiliar with the details of Pasteur's life and work. A word of commendation, however, must be given to the producers, Messrs. Warner Brothers Pictures, Ltd., for the excellent background representing a doctor's consulting room in pre-antiseptic times, the rural scenery and Pasteur's laboratory. In a film of this sort, intended for entertainment rather than for instruction, it is possibly pedantic to expect absolute historic accuracy. It must be admitted that an average audience will probably obtain from the film some idea of what a scientific attitude implies. They will certainly realise something of the thrill of successful research, as well as the drudgery and self-sacrifice which it involves. Also, there will be no doubt left in their minds regarding the social implications of the work of the man of science. The film was shown by permission of Gaumont British.

Australian Research Ship

THE Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research is about to build a specially designed Diesel-engined steel vessel for an extensive study of fish life in the ocean waters around Australia. Since the loss of the trawler *Endeavour* in 1914, with Dannevig on board and, presumably, the greater part of his records also, no systematic investigation of Australian fishing grounds has been carried on. The new vessel cannot be used for trawling, being designed mainly for the catching of surface swimming or pelagic fish by purse seine (and ring) nets; but it will be able to do a certain amount of work on demersal fish by means of Danish seine nets. The principal fish to which attention will be given at first are pilchards, Australian salmon, garfish, barracouta, members of the mackerel family including tunny, and other edible species. The length of the vessel will be 82 ft. and its beam 19 ft. Its extreme draught will be 8 ft. 4 in., and its displacement 108.5 tons. It will be capable of a speed of nine knots.

Australian Aborigines and Prospectors

AUSTRALIAN aborigines are said to have attacked and attempted to spear a party of gold prospectors who were searching for Lasseter's Reef, which is supposed to be rich in gold, and has been sought by such expeditions for years. According to reports from Alice Springs, it is stated in a dispatch from the Adelaide correspondent of *The Times* in the issue of

June 18, aeroplanes from Sydney reached Mount Bowley, a native reserve fifty miles from the West Australian border, on June 14, and the attack took place while the occupants were awaiting the arrival of the ground party with trucks. The blacks began by firing the porcupine grass, and after one of them had tried unsuccessfully to barter geological specimens, a group in war paint appeared and hurled spears. One prospector narrowly escaped being hit. The white party, which was armed with rifles and revolvers, then attacked and charged several times through the scrub, while further spears were thrown at them. No member of the party was injured. An investigation no doubt will be held. It will be important to know whether the attack was entirely unprovoked, or whether the party had unwittingly infringed what the tribesmen regard as their rights. The name of the tribe responsible is not mentioned, even if known; but neither the Arunta nor their neighbours, the Loritja, to whom the aggressors more probably belonged, according to recent accounts of them, are fiercely aggressive and liable to attack without reason, as are the northern saltwater black-fellows of Arnhem Land, who were responsible for the murder of Trooper McColl two years ago. Fear for their water supply is a frequent cause of trouble, and if prospectors for minerals are to be allowed to enter the reserves—generally it has been understood that this was forbidden—the risks of interference with tribal water-holes should be understood.

Transport Conditions in New York

AFTER studying transport conditions in America, Mr. J. P. Thomas, the manager of the London Transport Board railways, on his return to London gave an interview which is reported in *The Times* of June 19. He pointed out that New York would probably adopt a unified system of transport similar to that in use in London. He mentioned that the rush-hour problem in New York is as perplexing as in London, and intensive services have to be pressed into operation for very short periods at certain times of the day. In New York, certain business hours have been voluntarily altered by large offices and works so as to mitigate largely these rushes, with satisfactory results. If London firms would co-operate by altering the times of arrival and leaving of their staffs by 20 or 30 minutes, equally satisfactory results could be obtained, especially in the centre of the city. Mr. Thomas comments on the severely utilitarian appearance of New York's stations and on the difficulty of finding them, but he praises the efficiency of the underground staffs. He was impressed by the fact that the acceleration and retardation of trains in New York is much higher than in London, and yet they run equally smoothly. On some of the trains in New York, the acceleration is at the rate of three miles an hour a second and the retardation at the rate of four miles an hour a second. These rates are at least twice the rates at present adopted in London. Experiments have been carried out for some time in London on the 'Metrodyne' train. The experience gained in New York confirms the usefulness of this type of train, and the desirability of higher speeds.