

## Educational Topics and Events

CAMBRIDGE.—The Adam Smith prize, of the value of £40, offered annually for an essay on some unsettled question in economic science, has been awarded to D. G. Champernowne (King's College).

G. W. Robinson (Gonville and Caius College), professor of agricultural chemistry, University College of North Wales, Bangor, and H. W. Harvey (Downing College) have been approved for the degree of Sc.D.

EDINBURGH.—The following appointments have recently been made: Dr. J. A. Kitching, lecturer in zoology at Birkbeck College, London, to be lecturer in experimental zoology; O. A. Trowell, fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, to be lecturer in physiology; Alexander Brown, to be full-time assistant in physiology; Dr. Frederick Bath, lecturer in mathematics in University College, Dundee, to be lecturer in mathematics.

LONDON.—Dr. Edmund Giffen has been appointed University reader in mechanical engineering at King's College. Since 1931 he has been lecturer in the Engineering Department at the College.

The following have received the title of reader in the University: Dr. R. E. Gibbs (physics), in respect of the post held by him at University College; Dr. S. V. Keeling (philosophy), in respect of the post held by him at University College; Dr. D. M. Newitt (chemical technology), in respect of the post held by him at the Imperial College—Royal College of Science.

The title of emeritus professor in the University in the subjects indicated has been conferred on the following: Sir Grafton Elliot Smith, on his retirement from the University professorship of anatomy at University College; Prof. M. T. M. Ormsby, on his retirement from the Chadwick professorship of municipal engineering at University College; Prof. A. E. Jolliffe, on his retirement from the University professorship of mathematics at King's College; Prof. W. A. Bone, on his retirement from the University professorship of chemical technology at the Imperial College of Science and Technology; Prof. Alfred Fowler, on his retirement from the University professorship of astrophysics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology; Prof. E. W. MacBride, on his retirement from the University professorship of zoology at the Imperial College of Science and Technology; Prof. S. J. Truscott, on his retirement from the University professorship of mining at the Imperial College of Science and Technology; Prof. W. W. Watts, on his retirement from the University professorship of geology at the Imperial College of Science and Technology.

The following doctorates have been conferred: D.Sc. in mathematics on W. M. Shepherd (University College); D.Sc. in zoology on Maurice Burton (King's College).

OXFORD.—The names of the members of the four boards of electors to the new Nuffield professorships in medicine were announced on December 18. The Vice-Chancellor, Sir Farquhar Buzzard and Lord Nuffield's nominee, Dr. J. J. Conybeare, are members of all four boards. The professorships have been allotted to colleges as follows: clinical medicine to Magdalen, surgery to Balliol, obstetrics and gynæcology to Oriol and anaesthetics to Pembroke. It is intended to fill two of the new chairs—surgery and anaesthetics—on January 19, 1937.

THE annual meeting of the Mathematical Association will be held at the Institute of Education, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1, on January 4-5. The retiring president, Prof. A. R. Forsyth, will deliver an address entitled "Applied Mathematics in School Training: Some General Considerations". The president-elect is Prof. L. N. G. Filon. Further information can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary, Mr. G. L. Parsons, Peckwater, Eastcote Road, Pinner, Middlesex.

## Science News a Century Ago

William Lassell on Casting Specula

ON December 24, 1836, William Lassell (1799-1880) sent to the editor of the *Mechanics' Magazine* the last of three communications on "Casting and Grinding Specula". Lassell began life in a merchant's office in 1814, and then became a brewer in Liverpool, erecting an observatory at his home, Starfield. The process he had employed in making specula, he said, had been brought to such a degree of perfection in casting as left little to be desired in that branch of the art. His efforts had been in the direction of improvements in figuring and polishing reflectors so that these might rival the best refractors. The composition of the metal he used was 32 parts copper, 15-16 tin, and 1½ parts arsenic, by weight. The alloy was hard, brittle, white and susceptible of a high polish. For the copper, old copper bolts from ships had proved suitable. The specula he had made retained their polish for a long time even under unfavourable atmospheric conditions. "It was," he said, "much to be regretted that the composition of the metals of the late Sir William Herschel, exquisite as they must have been, were very prone to tarnish, so much so as to render them sometimes, even at an early age, unfit for use."

Lyell and Darwin

ON December 26, 1836, Lyell, then president of the Geological Society, wrote to Darwin asking him to dine with him, so that they could have an opportunity of talking over a paper the latter had written. In the course of his letter, Lyell said: "I have spent the last week entirely in comparing recent shells with fossil Eocene species, identified by Deshayes. . . . Don't accept any official scientific place, if you can avoid it, and tell no one that I gave you this advice, as they would all cry out against me as the preacher of anti-patriotic principles. I fought against the calamity of being President as long as I could. All has gone smoothly, and it has not cost me more time than I anticipated; but my question is, whether the time annihilated by learned bodies ('par les affaires administratives') is balanced by any good they do. Fancy exchanging Herschel at the Cape, for Herschel as President of the Royal Society, which he so narrowly escaped being, and I voting for him too! I hope to be forgiven for that. At least, work as I did, exclusively for yourself and for science for many years, and do not prematurely incur the honour or penalty of official dignities. There are people who may be profitably employed in such duties, because they would not work if not so engaged".