

interior of western Asia. Brak has also afforded from its early levels objects belonging to a Sumerian civilization of the Archaic period, revealed in this area for the first time. Among other accessions are the now famous inscriptions on potsherds from Lachish, which are deposited by the Wellcome Trustees. These inscriptions, the Lachish letters, are the earliest known example of written Hebrew, and refer to events mentioned in the Bible and relate apparently to the siege of Lachish by Nebuchadnezzar. The Egypt Exploration Society, at the instance of Dr. Alan H. Gardiner, has presented to the Museum the antiquities allotted to it from the Society's excavations on the site of Sesebi in the Egyptian Sudan, which were exhibited at the Society's rooms in July last. It will be remembered that these excavations are of special importance for the light they throw on the earlier years of Akhnaton's rule.

#### Introduction of Plants into British Colonies

THE Colonial Office has performed a useful service to growers and exporters of plants and also to the British Colonies, by the issue of a digest of the legislation on plant introduction in force at the end of December 1936 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1937; 1s. net). Introduced pests and diseases have occasionally done much damage: instances cited are 'brown hardback' (*Phytalus Smithi*), causing serious losses to the sugar planters in Mauritius; the 'wither tip' disease, largely responsible for the ruin of the lime industry in Dominica; and the 'witchbroom' disease of cacao, now causing so much havoc in Trinidad. Since then, in 1876, Malta first instituted an ordinance "to prevent the introduction of diseases affecting agricultural produce", enactments have grown in number and diversity, and there is now real need for their comprehensive survey, such as is rendered possible by this publication, with the view of gradually simplifying procedure and introducing where possible more legislative uniformity.

To this end the third Imperial Mycological Conference, held in London in 1934, urged the adoption of a uniform type of health certificate throughout the Empire; and a standard form accepted by all Colonial Governments appears in the appendix to this summary. Furthermore, the geographical grouping of some Dependencies permits a measure of common action in these matters which has great practical advantages, and the colonies of West Africa have entered into a plant exchange convention under which each Dependency enacts similar legislation. A similar convention now links the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo, to which Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland have since become parties. Proposals have also recently been approved for a similar arrangement in respect of East African Dependencies, and the necessary legislation is under consideration. This useful summary may supply the basis upon which further common action may be based that may lighten restrictions upon trade without removing

the necessary check upon the control of distribution of disease.

#### Manchester Scientists' Peace Association

THE Manchester Scientists' Peace Association, which has recently been formed with the objects of co-ordinating the influence and efforts of men of science of the Manchester district in the cause of peace, and of promoting a scientific and objective attitude to peace problems, held its first public meeting in the Milton Hall, Manchester, on December 13. The meeting was addressed by Prof. H. Levy, who stressed the importance of applying scientific methods to problems involving social relationships. He asked his audience not to be frightened by the feeling that the interaction of science and society is a political issue; politics it may be, but it is none the less amenable to attack as an objective problem. The professional politician, educated as a rule in the classical tradition, is frequently unable to appreciate this, and the entry into politics of more men of scientific training is most urgently required. But whether actively engaged in politics or not, the scientific man, especially if he has brought children into the world, cannot evade the responsibility of ensuring to the best of his abilities that the powers of science are used for the benefit, and not for the destruction, of the coming generation. A general meeting of the M.S.P.A. is to be held on January 17, at which a constitution will be proposed, officers elected and a programme of activities discussed. Particulars can be obtained from the provisional honorary secretary, Mr. D. C. Henry, The University, Manchester.

#### Impacts of Science

IN his Streatfield Memorial Lecture on October 15, entitled "Chemical Changes and Chances", Sir Martin Forster described some of his early experiences and the development of science in his early years which not only give a vivid and happy picture of Streatfield's personality but also afford a highly suggestive glimpse of the reactions of discoveries and personalities in the same period. He recalls being assured in November 1892 that all the most important discoveries in organic chemistry had been made, and then refers briefly to the way in which Nef, Claisen, Fischer, Pope and others rapidly enlarged our ideas of valency, intramolecular change, the configuration of sugars, the Walden inversion, etc. In discussing the reactions of science on industry, Sir Martin stresses the factor of the reaction of personality to background, and the rarity of finding a brain in which chemical and commercial instincts are co-equally powerful. He endorses Mr. Cronshaw's conclusion regarding the languishing of the dyestuffs industry in Great Britain and repudiates the unjustified condemnation of the business man in which chemists sometimes too readily indulge. On the contrary, he asserts that, in his experience, business men take reasonable trouble to ascertain the facts with which they have to deal, and he cites examples of benefits which the world enjoys through their enterprise.