

War Office to take charge of medical affairs, and Dr. A. de C. Sowerby was zoologist, our countrymen being thus largely represented on the scientific staff. The expedition crossed the Yellow River, went into winter quarters at Yen-an Fu, and thence the route lay roughly westward. But at Lan-chou, Hazrat Ali, while engaged in surveying, was murdered in circumstances which were never fully ascertained, and the popular excitement thus aroused necessitated the return of the party. It is much to be regretted that, in spite of every kind of pressure on the Chinese Foreign Office, no reparation has been made for this atrocious murder of a British subject.

A NEW INTERNATIONAL PHYSICAL INSTITUTE.

IN the year 1911 an account was given in this journal (vol. lxxxviii, p. 82) of a conference of scientific men in Brussels to discuss the general theories of radiation. This meeting, which was of unusual interest and importance, was due to the initiative of Mr. Ernest Solvay, of Brussels. At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Solvay offered to donate a sum of money to assist scientific research in the domain of physics and chemistry. After consultation with Prof. Lorentz, of Leyden, the president of the meeting, Mr. Solvay agreed



Colossal Buddha, at Ta-fu-ssü, Shensi. From "Through Shên-Kan."

In addition to the account of the journey which was thus tragically interrupted, a careful itinerary and a good map are provided. Mr. Clark and Dr. Sowerby contribute reports on the results. Most of the collections, except the insects which Captain Douglas has presented to the British Museum, have gone to the United States National Museum. Some interesting mammals, including a new three-toed jerboa (*Dipus sowerbyi*) and a polecat (*Vormela negans*), were found; but the record in other departments is rather disappointing. On the whole, considering the disaster which brought the expedition to a close, much useful work was done, and the splendid series of photographs makes the work of permanent value to science.

to found an International Physical Institute for a limited period of thirty years, to have its headquarters at Brussels. The resources of the institute were provided by the generous donation of a capital sum of one million francs. Part of the proceeds is to be devoted to the foundation of scholarships for the promotion of scientific research in Belgium, part to defray the expenses of international meetings to discuss scientific problems of interest, and the residue to be awarded in the form of grants to scientific investigators to assist them in their researches.

For the first year, which terminates on May 1, 1913, a sum of about 17,500 francs is available for the latter purpose. It is the intention of the committee each year to give grants for special lines

of work. As the first international meeting was engaged in the discussion of the theories of radiation, it is proposed this year to assist preferentially researches on the general phenomena of radiation, comprising Rontgen rays and the rays from radioactive bodies, general molecular theory, and theories of units of energy. The grants will be awarded without distinction of nationality by the administrative committee of the institute on the recommendation of the international scientific committee.

The administrative committee is composed of Profs. P. Heger, E. Tassel, and J. E. Verschaffelt, of Brussels; the scientific committee is composed of H. A. Lorentz (Haarlem), Mme. Curie (Paris), M. Brillouin (Paris), R. B. Goldschmidt (Brussels), H. Kamerlingh-Onnes (Leyden), W. Nernst (Berlin), E. Rutherford (Manchester), E. Warburg (Berlin), and M. Knudsen, secretary (Copenhagen).

The requests for subsidies should be addressed before February 1, 1913, to Prof. H. A. Lorentz, Zijlweg 76, Haarlem, Holland. They should be accompanied by definite information on the problem to be attacked, the methods to be employed, and the sum required. Definite regulations have been drawn up for the administration of the institute and for the periodical change of the members of the international scientific committee, which are intended to be representative of the active scientific workers in physics and chemistry in Europe.

Mr. Ernest Solvay has in the past been a very generous supporter of science, and has been responsible for the endowment of several scientific institutes in Brussels. The new Solvay International Institute, which is due entirely to the generosity of Mr. Solvay, is unique in character, and promises to be of great value to science. It will offer an admirable opportunity for scientific men of all nations to meet together and to exchange views on questions connected with physics and chemistry, and to obtain a consensus of opinion as to the best direction in which grants should be given to extend or deepen our knowledge of special subjects. As the funds available for distribution are limited, the decision of the committee to restrict the grants for each year to investigations in a special department of science seems a wise one, and should be more fruitful in results than if the money were distributed in small sums over a wide field of scientific inquiry. The subjects for which grants are available will, no doubt, be changed from time to time in accordance with the decision of the international committee.

E. RUTHERFORD.

#### THE BIRMINGHAM MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

THE arrangements for the forthcoming meeting of the British Association in Birmingham are being actively proceeded with, and the following provisional statement shows how matters stand.

Among the new features of the British Associa-

tion meeting at Birmingham in September next there will be a complete series of "Citizens' Lectures." These are intended to give working men and women the opportunity of taking part in the association's meeting. They will be held each evening (except the first evening and Sunday evening) and will constitute a perfectly distinct branch of work from the regular activities of the association.

In view of the central and accessible position of Birmingham, a large attendance of members is anticipated, and a local fund of 6000*l.* is being raised in order that the arrangements may be worthy of the city. A sum of 4000*l.* has already been promised as the result of a private canvass, and a public appeal for the remainder has just been issued.

The meeting will commence on Wednesday, September 10, after an interval of twenty-seven years since the last visit to Birmingham. The usual opening business meetings will then be held, and will be followed by the inaugural address of the president (Sir William White, K.C.B.) in the evening. On Thursday, September 11, the sectional meetings will commence, and the programme includes an evening reception by the Lord Mayor (Lieutenant-Colonel E. Martineau) at the Council House. On the Friday, in addition to the usual programme of sectional and committee work, there will probably be a reception at the new University Buildings, Bournbrook, and special arrangements will be made to show members over the various scientific departments. In the evening one of two discourses will be given.

The excursions on the Saturday will include Stratford, Coventry, Kenilworth, Warwick, and Shrewsbury; whilst special expeditions will be arranged for archæologists, botanists, geologists, and geographers. On the Sunday there will be special services at the Cathedral and other places of worship. The following day there will be an entertainment given by the local committee. On Tuesday, September 16, the draft programme includes a conference of delegates, a garden party in the afternoon, and the delivery of the second discourse in the evening. The usual closing business meetings will be held on Wednesday, September 17.

#### LORD HALDANE ON EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATION.

THE announcement made by the Lord Chancellor on Friday last, in replying to the toast of his health as the guest of the Manchester Reform Club, will be welcomed by all who have the interests of English education at heart. Speaking after consultation with the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the President of the Board of Education, Lord Haldane said the next great social problem with which the Government intends to deal is education and its organisation. As readers of NATURE will know, the British Science Guild and other important bodies working for the provision of a properly