

blending at the summit "in a triumph of whitest white." with a second bow above it, and "a wondrous sequence" beyond that, is evidently the hybrid offspring of fancy and that inaccurate observation of phenomena which seems inevitable without scientific training, especially as, while evening service is going on in Zion Chapel, the moon's "full face" is shining in the West, and the bow appears in "the empty other half of the sky," "North and South and East." The effect of "the flying moon" trying to break out of its "ramparted cloud prison" is, however, very graphically described.

But I should like to know when and where the poet could have seen his Aurora. B. W. S.

July 8.

#### A Plague of Frogs.

THIS afternoon, as I was walking into Lickey Village from King's Norton, I came across innumerable frogs. They lined the hedges and covered the road so thickly that I had to walk on tiptoe. I thus proceeded quite 400 yards, where the phenomenon ended as sharply defined as it had begun. Nowhere else along the road was a frog to be seen. I was particularly astonished, as I knew the nearest water to be the Little Reservoir—quite  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away. The frogs were about ten days old, very small. A cottage stood about 300 yards from the beginning of this swarm. Upon inquiry I ascertained that the frogs had thus congregated since noon on Monday, that they had literally besieged the house, jumping all over the ground-floor rooms, that the garden and its paths were full of them. The present occupants had lived there  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years, but had never experienced anything like this. They have sometimes seen a few frogs cross the road in wet weather. They are now occupied with brushing them out of doors. Can any of your readers explain the cause of this extraordinary spectacle?

King's Norton, Birmingham, July 5. F. H. FORTEY.

#### THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

AS we went to press last week, an adjourned meeting of the Senate of the University of London was being held to discuss the report of the special committee appointed to consider the offer of the Government to house the University in the Imperial Institute. The history of the negotiations that have taken place may be read in the abridged report published in last week's NATURE; and the facts contained in that statement formed the basis of the discussion in the Senate. In the end the offer of the Government was accepted, the following resolution, proposed by Sir Edward Fry and seconded by Mr. Bryce, being carried by a large majority:

"That the Senate accepts the proposal of Her Majesty's Government as far as it provides in the buildings of the Imperial Institute accommodation for the work hitherto done by the University; and authorises the Committee consisting of the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, and Sir J. G. Fitch to settle the formal terms of agreement with the Government, and the Senate reserves the right of the University to hereafter request the Government to make further provision for such further needs as may arise in the future."

By this resolution the question of the future headquarters of the University is practically settled. The schemes of organisation of the constituent Colleges of the University and future possible teaching centres are now matters of the highest importance, for by them the future work and influence of the University will be determined. An ideal University should encourage the advancement of every branch of knowledge which assists human progress, and it can only do this by admitting into its constitution all subjects with which men of "light and leading" are concerned. It can hardly be held that the University of London has satisfied these conditions in the past, but under the new constitution we may confidently hope that a wider view will be taken of its functions and responsibilities. We have no longer to deal merely with a body authorised to confer degrees by examination, but with a

living organisation taking part in the actual work of instruction. The teachers in this great University will feel that the interests of the University are their own interests, and that their work is not to have for its end the preparation of candidates for degrees, but to encourage students to work for the dignity and influence of their *alma mater*.

There are several directions in which the work of the University ought to be developed. Law and medicine should, of course, have their Faculties, as they have in the Universities of Paris, Bologna and elsewhere; and we may surely look to those institutions which have for centuries kept the lamp burning in the absence of a University for the needed help. Higher commercial education can be provided for by the establishment of a School of Economics and Political Science organised at the Imperial Institute itself. The exceptional facilities offered by the Institute for the work of a school of this character were referred to in an article in NATURE of April 20 in the following words:

"The well-arranged collections of Indian and Colonial products, which form a most important part of the equipment of the Imperial Institute, would be found of especial value in illustrating the teaching of that branch of commercial education known as *Waarenkunde*. Nowhere else in London do similar facilities exist for instruction in the technology of commercial products. Within the building, too, has been provided a chemical laboratory, which is now largely used for the examination and analysis of foreign products; and much of the scientific investigation therein carried on, under the able direction of Prof. Dunstan, is an essential feature in the programme of a high school of commerce. Indeed, a large part of the work which entered into the original scheme of the promoters of the Imperial Institute might, it would seem, consistently, and with great advantage to the public, be continued in that Institute under the auspices of a school of economics, industry and commerce, in connection with the reconstituted University of London. Whether such an arrangement can be effected is a matter for careful consideration; but there is no doubt that the association with the new University of a school of 'economics and political science,' under a separate Faculty, suggests a reasonable basis of union between the educational side of the Imperial Institute and the future University of London."

In connection with this suggestion, another point well deserves consideration. The support which the Colonies have given to the Institute has been in some cases withdrawn on the ground that no advantage was derived from it. But with a commercial school at the Institute colonial students could come over to pursue their studies in the midst of collections illustrating the products of their homes, and the training they would receive with such an environment would ultimately be used for the benefit of the Colonies, so that an adequate return would be made for whatever support was given. In fact, it seems that the use of the collections for the purposes of instruction in connection with the new University would satisfactorily settle the question of the service of the Institute to the Colonies, as well as give colonial students an opportunity of obtaining a degree under the very best conditions.

If the example is once set by using the Institute collections to illustrate courses of instruction on colonial products and industries, it is to be hoped that the other special collections which abound in London illustrating many other branches of culture may also be utilised for University purposes. With its new resources and facilities for advanced teaching, the University is given the opportunity of widely increasing its sphere of influence; and friends of education and national progress look to it to make the best use of the opportunities which the new headquarters will afford.