his homeland across the Atlantic. Mr. Vail's life-work was the development of the "Bell" telephone system in the United States, and it is to his personal initiative that the enormous growth of the American Telephone and Telegraph Co., of which he was for many years the president, is largely due. He was a rare combination of the business man, quick to see opportunities and far-seeing in his policy, and the patient, scientific worker. It is not too much to say that the success of the American telephone system, culminating in the achievement of speech from New York to San Francisco, is mainly due to the unremitting attention that he gave to the organisation and prosecution of research, and the technical laboratories that he initiated are the finest in any industrial undertaking. It is pleasant to think that, unlike many workers on parallel lines, Mr. Vail lived to behold the fruit of his labours.

THE death is announced, at the age of eighty years, of DR. JOHN A. BRASHEAR, the founder of the well-known American firm of makers of astronomical and physical instruments. In his youth, while working as a machinist, Dr. Brashear devoted himself to the study of astronomy, and made his first telescope while pursuing this hobby after his working hours. With this instrument he made many observations, as a result of which he contributed articles to the daily Press on comets, etc. These attracted the attention of Mr. William Shaw, whose offer to build and equip for him a good shop for the production of astronomical instruments was accepted. This ultimately developed into the works of the John A. Brashear Co. at Pittsburgh, which turns out instruments that are used in observatories all over the world. Dr. Brashear received the honorary doctorate from Pittsburgh and other universities, and from 1901 to 1904 was acting chancellor of the Western University of Pennsylvania, now the University of Pittsburgh. He was a member of many American and foreign scientific societies, and was a recognised authority on solar phenomena, lunar craters, and other subjects.

MR. JAMES METCALFE, who died on April 12, was born in 1847, and was locomotive superintendent of the Manchester and Milford Railway from 1867 to 1880. He was afterwards managing director of the Patent Exhaust Steam Injector Co., whose injectors are extensively used in locomotives. Mr. Metcalfe was elected a member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in 1906.

THE death is announced of MR. FRANK EDWARD PRIEST as having taken place on April 14. Mr. Priest was born in 1860, and was chiefly interested in railways, waterworks, and road and sewerage works. He took a great interest in aeronautics, and at the time of his death he was chairman of Messrs. A. V. Roe and Co., Ltd. He was elected a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1896.

Notes.

FURTHER news from Capt. Roald Amundsen fails to explain his movements. According to the *Times* of April 23, a message has been received in Norway from the wireless station on the Anadir to the effect that the expedition will arrive at Nome, Alaska, at the end of July. Nome is the port Amundsen reached on his accomplishment of the North-West Passage in the *Gjoa* in 1905. Possibly his ambitions include the North-West Passage before starting on his North Polar journey. These two difficult journeys, in addition to the discovery of the South Pole and the not improbable attainment of the North Pole, would be a remarkable record for one man. A start on the polar drift from Bering Strait or Point Barrow entails a longer route than Amundsen had originally intended, so that he may be calling at Nome for extra stores. News of the arrival of Amundsen himself at Anadir needs confirmation.

NOW that political and social conditions are more favourable in the Near East, a certain recrudescence of archæological activity is evident. The recent discoveries of M. Hatzidakis at Mallia, in Crete, have been followed by a further discovery west of Candia. M. Xanthoudides has excavated a Cretan palace, which appears to date for the most part from the end of the Middle Minoan period to the end of the first Late Minoan period. The most important discovery made in the palace was a series of colossal bronze double-axes, measuring several feet in length in some cases. No such axes of this size have yet been found on Cretan sites, and their purpose is for the present obscure. Another excavation by M. Xanthoudides near Candia brought to light some pottery of Early Minoan date of a peculiar type. Similar pottery has been found only at one other site in Crete, and it does not appear to be typically Cretan. In shape the vases found resemble the so-called Minyan ware. In technique they have no parallel in Cretan wares. The detailed publication of both these excavations will be awaited with the greatest interest.

APPLICATIONS for grants in aid of scientific investigations bearing on agriculture are receivable by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries not later than May 15. They must be made upon Form A. 230/1, copies of which are obtainable upon application to the General Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 72 Victoria Street, S.W.1.

THE Minister of Health has appointed a Committee to consider and advise on the legislative and administrative measures to be taken for the effective control of the quality and authenticity of such therapeutic substances offered for sale to the public as cannot be tested adequately by direct chemical means. The members of the Committee are:—Sir Mackenzie Chalmers (chairman), Dr. H. H. Dale, Dr. G. F. McCleary, Mr. A. B. Maclachlan, and Dr. C. J. Martin. The secretary is Dr. E. W. Adams, of the Ministry of Health.

THE following have been elected officers and council of the Society of Antiquaries of London: *President:*