

a similar kind is necessary if French chemical factories are to remain in operation and French chemists in employment.

THE Bibliographic Institute for Auxiliary Scientific Work (1a Longridge Road, London, S.W. 5), established in 1917, affords assistance in the work of scientific research by supplying bibliographies upon subjects of any kind. The cost of such bibliographies depends entirely upon the range of work comprised in the special subject stated. Further information can be obtained from the English representative of the Institute at the above address.

A MEMORIAL window in Westminster Abbey in remembrance of Sir J. W. Wolfe Barry, past president of the Institution of Civil Engineers, was dedicated on December 7 by the Dean of Westminster. The window, which is in the nave, contains the figures of two angels holding tablets on which are inscribed the words "In Memory of John Wolfe Barry, K.C.B., F.R.S., Civil Engineer. Born 1836. Died 1918." Below the tablets are shields showing, among others, the arms of the Institution of Civil Engineers, of the University of London, and Sir John Wolfe Barry's personal arms.

THE annual meeting of the Mathematical Association will be held on Monday, January 1, and Tuesday, January 2, at the London Day Training College, Southampton Row. At the Monday meeting, which is to be at 5.30, Dr. S. Brodetsky will read a paper on "Gliding." On Tuesday there will be two sessions, one at 10 and the other at 2.30. At the first, a statement respecting the forthcoming report of the Sub-committee on the Teaching of Geometry

will be made by Prof. E. H. Neville, and the following communications will be read: "The Uses of Non-Euclidean Geometry to Teachers," W. C. Fletcher; "Simple Geometrical and Kinematical Illustrations of the Plane Complex," Prof. R. W. Genese; and "A Certain Dissection Problem," J. Brill. At the afternoon meeting Sir Thomas L. Heath will deliver his presidential address, taking as his subject "Greek Geometry, with Special Reference to Infinitesimals"; and Prof. A. Lodge will read a paper on "Differentials as the Basis for Teaching the Calculus."

A USEFUL Catalogue (New Series, No. 5) of second-hand books on sale by Messrs. Wheldon and Wesley, Ltd., 2 Arthur Street, W.C.2, has just been issued. It contains upwards of 1200 titles of works dealing with geology, mineralogy, mining, coal gas, water, building materials, metal manufactures, etc.

MESSRS. DULAU AND CO., LTD., 34 Margaret Street, W.1, have just circulated a short, but choice, catalogue (No. 98) of Early Botanical Books. It is arranged under the headings "Herbals and Materia Medica," and "Early Agriculture and Gardening: Flora, Fungi, Orchids, Serial Publications, etc." Among the 356 works listed many are scarce.

THE Institute of Metals, 36 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1, has issued a name and subject index of the Journal of Institute (vols. i-xxv.). The volume contains more than 20,000 entries and covers metallurgical work done during the period 1909-21. Copies can be obtained through booksellers or direct from the Institute of Metals.

### Our Astronomical Column.

THE REPORTED NOVA IN LYRA.—In this column last week reference was made to the announcement of the appearance of a new star near the constellation of Lyra. The weather conditions for observing the object were not favourable, in this country at least, until the night of December 6, when observations were made at Greenwich, the Norman Lockyer Observatory in Devon, and at Armagh. All the observers reported that no bright star existed in the region of the supposed nova; in fact, photographs of the spectra of stars in that region down to the sixth magnitude, taken at the Norman Lockyer Observatory, did not reveal the presence of any star giving the characteristic spectrum of a new star. That a star of the first magnitude should dim so quickly in such a short period of time would be quite unique in the records of novæ, so it must be assumed that the observer was mistaken or the announcement incorrect.

Dr. A. C. D. Crommelin writes: "Widespread cloud prevented the announcement of the discovery of a Nova in Lyra from being tested at once, and it was thought advisable to circulate it with a caution, so that advantage might be taken of any clear intervals to search for it. December 6 was fairly clear at Greenwich, and it was quickly found that there was no strange orb visible to the naked eye in the neighbourhood of the given spot. Telescopic comparison was made with the B.D. chart for an area of 4 square degrees round the position without

success. This search was conclusive, at least down to magnitude 7. Dr. Lockyer, Mr. Ellison (Armagh), Prof. Strömberg, and Dr. W. H. Steavenson also searched without success. The *Daily Mail* cabled to Bucharest and learnt that the Astronomical Society there knew nothing of the discovery. There is therefore practically no doubt that the announcement was the result of some mistake, the exact nature of which it is useless to conjecture."

LARGE FIREBALLS.—Mr. W. F. Denning writes:—"A large fireball appeared on November 24 at 6.40 P.M. which was seen from London, Manchester, and other places. It caused considerable flare in the sky for several seconds, and threw off a train of sparks at the later period of its flight. Comparing the various observations the radiant point is indicated at  $87^{\circ} + 34^{\circ}$  and the meteor fell from a height of 71 to 26 miles. Its length of path was about 124 miles, and velocity 25 miles per second. It passed over the earth from the region about 12 miles west of Grimsby to Shrewsbury. The radiant point near Theta Aurigæ is a fairly well-known centre of a minor shower observed during the last half of November."

Another great fireball appeared at about midnight on December 6 and caused a surprising illumination in the region of north Lincolnshire. A noise like thunder was heard two minutes after the disappearance of the meteor. The flight of the meteor was from east to west, but details of an exact nature are lacking.