

afford a guarantee against disturbance by possible future building operations. The Admiralty has undertaken to meet the wishes of the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society by acquiring an equal area of land adjacent to the common and adding it to the common so that the total area of the common will not be reduced.

Academic Biology.

UNDER the title "The Dry-rot of our Academic Biology," Prof. W. M. Wheeler delivered a most provocative address to the American Society of Naturalists, which is printed in *Science* (vol. 57, pp. 61-70). The address may have been written under the reaction from the author's labours upon a volume of 1100 pages upon ants, but it provides food for thought for the teacher of biology. The title seems to have been chosen in part with an impish desire to lead the librarian astray, so that future students of the fungi may find it "reposing unashamed between such monuments of cryptogamic erudition as the 74 folio volumes of Professor Farlow's 'Toadstools of God's Footstool' and the 27 quarto volumes of Professor Thaxter's 'Laboulbeniales of the Universe'"; in part to indicate Prof. Wheeler's foreboding as to the devastating effect of academic biology upon the young minds exposed to the danger.

Apparently 25 per cent. of the young men and women graduating in the United States have had at least the equivalent of an elementary course in botany or zoology, but of these very few exhibit a vital and abiding interest in biological inquiry. This seems to have led to this interesting analysis of the relative ineffectiveness of biological teaching (tinged, perhaps, with the after effects of eleven hundred pages upon ants!). Some of the suggested defects will certainly provoke sympathetic response in Great Britain, for instance the complaint that biologists are compelled to be most active pedagogically during the annual "glacial period," with a consequent reliance upon preserved material of convenient types and a great restriction of field studies. The mature student who, after four years in a divinity school, relinquished attendance upon a course in genetics because the professor's mental processes were so similar to those of his divinity teachers when they held forth on predestination, salvation through grace, etc., is cited as part of a general indictment which suggests the reflection that the best culture medium for the academic dry-rot fungus consists of about equal parts of narrow, unsympathetic specialisation, and normal or precocious senile abstraction. There are redeeming features, however, and the author rejects a friend's remedial proposal that staffs should be completely changed and buildings burnt out or thoroughly disinfected every 25 years! Another tendency which is deplored is the migration of the American graduate to the German laboratory and the teaching of authority, instead of spending the few precious post-graduate years among the problems provided at her door by the flora and fauna of the tropics.

Two positive suggestions for improvement are made: first, that teaching should be more ecological in a very wide sense of the term, and botany is certainly moving very rapidly in this direction in Great Britain; secondly, that opportunities should be provided for the amateur naturalist to meet the young student both in the laboratory and in the field, and so counteract the paralysing influence of academic formalism by his unprofessional enthusiasm and interest.

University and Educational Intelligence.

LONDON.—The work of the Ramsay Memorial Department of Chemical Engineering at University College will begin in October. The department has been instituted with the object of enabling young graduates in chemistry and engineering, who have already obtained a good training in the fundamental sciences of chemistry, physics, and mathematics, to direct their studies and investigations towards the application of the principles of physical chemistry to the scientific design and operation of the apparatus and processes of chemical industry in general. Mr. E. C. Williams, of the University of Manchester, has been appointed professor in charge of the department. An assistant lecturer, who must have had an engineering training, will shortly be appointed by University College Committee.

THE Folland scholarship in metallurgy, in connexion with the University College of Swansea, is to be offered in competition on September 10 and following days. The scholarship is of the annual value of 50*l.*, and tenable for three years. Further particulars are obtainable from the Registrar of the College.

A LIMITED number of grants in aid to junior assistants in chemical works and laboratories in or near London, desirous of extending their knowledge of chemistry, will shortly be allocated by the committee of the Salters' Institute of Industrial Chemistry. Applications must be sent before September 15 to the director of the Institute, Salters' Hall, St. Swithin's Lane, E.C.4.

APPLICATIONS are invited by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh for the Parkin prize, value 100*l.*, which is open to competitors of all nations, for the best essay on "the curative effects of carbonic acid gas or other forms of carbon in cholera, for different forms of fever and other diseases." Competing essays, which must be written in English, must reach the Secretary of the College not later than December 31 next, bear a motto, and be accompanied by a sealed envelope bearing the same motto outside, and the author's name inside. It is stipulated that the successful candidate shall publish his essay at his own expense, and present a printed copy of it to the college within the space of three months after the adjudication of the prize.

MUCH of the scientific information latent in government publications fails to reach those to whom it would be of the greatest utility. An example of how such information can be made more generally accessible is the index issued by the United States Bureau of Education to documents having a bearing on the subject of home economics. This (revised March, 1923) includes not only 55 of the Bureau's own pamphlets, but several hundreds of others issued by the Department of Agriculture, the Bureaus of Standards, of Mines, and of Fisheries, the Labour Department Children's Bureau, the Public Health Service, the Federal Board of Vocational Education, and the American Red Cross.

"THE janitor of a modern school building is, next to the principal, perhaps the most important officer in the school." This pronouncement by Dr. Dresslar, an American authority on school hygiene, is quoted with approval by the author of "The School Janitor: a study of the functions and administration of school janitor service," Bulletin, 1922, No. 24 of the United States Bureau of Education. The writer goes on to show that although the average annual salary of school janitors is 980 dollars, or more than 50 per cent.