



SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 1926.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Position of Naval Engineers	577
Egyptology in Victorian Dress	578
Timber Pests. By P. G.	581
British Universities. By S. J. W.	581
Histogenesis of Human Endocrine Organs	582
Our Bookshelf	583
Letters to the Editor :	
The Fine Structure of the X-ray Absorption Edge in the K-Series of Argon and its Possible Interpretation.—Dr. D. Coster and J. H. van der Tuuk	586
Spinning Electrons and the Structure of Spectra.—Dr. J. C. Slater	587
Mercury Helides.—J. J. Manley	587
Ecotypes of Plants.—Prof. T. D. A. Cockerell	588
The Boskop Skull.—Prof. R. Broom, F.R.S.	589
The Stone Age in Ceylon.—Dr. Henry O. Forbes	589
The Hydrogen Doublet.—Dr. William V. Houston	590
Domestic Heating.—Dr. Marie C. Stopes	590
The Oxidation of Ammonia.—Prof. J. R. Partington	590
What We Know.—Prof. Henry E. Armstrong, F.R.S.	590
Odours and the Sense of Smell. By Dr. J. H. Kenneth	591
The Geological Age of the Earth. By Dr. Arthur Holmes	592
Fuel Research. By H. J. Hodsman	594
Obituary :—	
Dr. W. E. Haworth	595
Mr. A. R. McCulloch. By C. A.	596
Mr. E. K. Jordan. By Prof. Albert Guérard	596
News and Views	597
Our Astronomical Column	601
Research Items	602
Exhibits at the Optical Convention, 1926	605
The Intermittent Theory of Radiation	606
Salient Features in the Stratigraphy, Tectonic Structure, and Physiography of the Commonwealth of Australia	607
Ventilation and Comfort	608
University and Educational Intelligence	608
Contemporary Birthdays	609
Societies and Academies	609
Official Publications Received	611
Diary of Societies and Public Lectures	612
Recent Scientific and Technical Books	Supp. iii

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The Position of Naval Engineers.

IT was the late Lord Goschen who, forty years ago, remarked in the House of Commons that "discontent in the public service is a great calamity to the country." Curiously enough, he was then referring to the efforts being made to raise the status of engineer officers in the Royal Navy. Were he alive to-day he would have greater cause to utter the warning, for if ever there was a matter calling for inquiry and remedial measures, it is the discontent which has arisen through the treatment of the engineer officers of to-day, and especially those who have been trained at Osborne and at Dartmouth. These are the officers who, instead of electing to remain on the upper deck and to become navigating, torpedo, and gunnery officers, have specialised in engineering duties and are therefore known as lieutenants 'E' and commanders 'E.' Numbering between two and three hundred, these officers have been promised over and over again that by specialising in engineering their position as executive officers should in no way be jeopardised, and that they should be considered eligible for appointments as admiral superintendents of dockyards and similar posts. They were, in fact, to remain on an absolute equality with the navigating, torpedo, and gunnery officers, except that by becoming engineer officers they abandoned the right to command sea-going ships and, of course, fleets. Of these things there is no shadow of doubt whatever. There never was a clearer case of what was promised and intended, and the officers in question have nothing to fear by the fullest publicity.

The discontent to which we refer is the result of the Fleet Order No. 3241 of last November, an Order which will go down to history as one of the most sinister pieces of internal legislation recorded in any of our public services. Meantly conceived, provocatively worded and aggressively promulgated, that Order has created dissatisfaction throughout the engineering world, and the remonstrance uttered by Sir William Ellis at the recent dinner of the Institution of Naval Architects, when two members of the Board of Admiralty were present, is without precedent in the history of naval affairs. This great Institution was founded in 1860, but we believe a search through its index would fail to find any similar reference to any body of officers employed under the Admiralty, much less to a body of officers who come under the Naval Discipline Act. The remonstrance of Sir William Ellis had been preceded earlier in the day by the speech of the Duke of Northumberland, who, as president of the Institution, voiced the opinion of the council on which serve some of our greatest naval architects, shipbuilders, and engineers, and among whom are Admiralty officers.

We have already, in our article of February 6 on "The Status of the Naval Engineer," given a fair and impartial account of the circumstances leading up to the grant of military status to all engineer officers, and we there referred to the deputation which, with Sir William Ellis as its head, waited upon the First Lord, the Right Hon. W. C. Bridgeman, M.P. Mr. Bridgeman's reply unfortunately revealed no spirit of conciliation or sympathy. He practically told the deputation they had no case, there was nothing in the order derogatory to the position of the engineer officers, and that there was no cause for any feeling of injustice. If Mr. Bridgeman really meant what he said, then he could not have taken the trouble to get down to the bottom of things, while if he simply acted as the mouthpiece of the executive officers on the Board, he was wanting in the first attribute of a statesman.

The further action of the deputation is justified in every respect. It immediately published in full the memorandum which had been handed to Mr. Bridgeman; it stated that Mr. Bridgeman's reply was viewed with grave concern, and it said it would take steps to raise the question in Parliament and the public press. Since then a debate has taken place in the House of Commons in which Mr. Bridgeman treated the matter as of little moment and, among other things, said, "I do not think that those who have raised this question are doing any service to the Engineer Officers in the Navy by trying to magnify what I think is a very trifling irritation," so that which every engineer both inside the Admiralty and outside consider a gross injustice, Mr. Bridgeman regards as a "trifling irritation."

The more one knows of the Order the more one is astonished; and how the distinguished men on the Board could have put their names to such a document is inexplicable. The Order, if it meant anything, meant that it took away the special standing granted to engineer officers by the Selborne Scheme and by the Admiralty action in 1915. The granting of military status to engineers in the Navy was welcomed right throughout the land, but to-day, with the echo of the guns still in our ears, the very Admirals who gained their earldoms and their knightships and their grants of public money through the successes which in the first place depended on the efficiency of the engineering branch of the Navy, are content to see the engineers again reduced to the inferior position they occupied for so long.

Were all their eulogies of the engineering department so much lip service? Here is one such eulogy: it was written after the Battle of Jutland. "During action the officers and men of that department perform their most important duties without the incentive which the

knowledge of the course of the action gives to those on deck. The qualities of discipline and endurance are taxed to the utmost under these conditions, and they were, as always, most fully maintained throughout the operations under review."

During the War, the Engineer-in-Chief was responsible for a personnel exceeding eighty thousand, and yet to-day his department can be treated as if of little account; an Order adversely affecting the whole of his staff can be drawn up without consulting him, and all the guarantees given can be converted into scraps of paper.

To all this there is no answer. The pages of the engineering press and the columns of the *Times* have recorded again and again the protests of the engineers who have served in the Navy and are of the engineering profession, and though there are some three hundred retired flag officers and some six hundred retired captains, none of them come forward to uphold the Admiralty or to explain the need for the deprivation of the engineers of their military status. Could there be any more significant fact? The Order of last November had as its sole object the belittlement of the engineers, and it was known at the time that the want of military status would load the scale against the engineer on every possible occasion.

It would be a slander to say that the Order of November reflects the general attitude of the executive officers of the fleet toward the engineer officers, for there is plenty of evidence to the contrary. If the Board of Admiralty is resolved not to rescind the Order, it will be the duty of the Engineering Institutions to take the matter higher, for clearly the injustice of the whole thing will inevitably foster that discontent which Lord Goschen stated to be "a great calamity to the country."

Egyptology in Victorian Dress.

Descriptive Sociology: or, Groups of Sociological Facts.

Classified and Arranged by Herbert Spencer. Division 1, No. 11: Ancient Egyptians, Compiled and Abstracted upon the Plan organised by Herbert Spencer by Prof. Sir W. Flinders Petrie. Issued by Mr. Spencer's Trustees. Pp. iii + 3 Tables + 79. (London: Williams and Norgate, Ltd., 1925.) 25s. net.

"IN preparation for *The Principles of Sociology*, requiring as bases of induction large accumulations of data, fitly arranged for comparison, I, in October 1867, commenced by proxy the collection and organisation of facts presented by societies of different types, past and present: being fortunate enough to secure the services of gentlemen competent