

subjects, from Asiatic ritual dances to currency and zebras.

Those who were privileged to see Sir William's family life gained another view of this very remarkable man. His love for his wife was as apparent as it was deserved, for Lady Ridgeway devoted her life to her brilliant husband, and no one will ever know what he owed to her. She was his prop for very many years as his eyesight increasingly failed, and she dispensed gracious hospitality to his friends in their charming home at Fen Ditton. Her sudden death at the end of May was a terrible blow, and though he gallantly tried to overcome his desolation and to take up the threads of his old life, he was a broken man until death mercifully took him in his sleep during the night of

August 11: a peaceful ending for a strenuous and militant life.  
A. C. HADDON.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Mr. William Fawcett, lately Director of Public Gardens and Plantations, Jamaica, on August 14, aged seventy-five years.

Prof. Robert Gnehm, professor of technical chemistry, and afterwards director of the Technical High School, Zurich, who was known for his investigations on dyeing processes and dyestuffs, aged seventy-four years.

Dr. J. F. Hall-Edwards, president of the British Electro-Therapeutic Society, and a pioneer in the field of medical radiology, on August 15, aged sixty-seven years.

### News and Views.

THE meeting of the British Association at Oxford which ended on August 11 has been memorable in many ways; and not least for the specially interesting character of the proceedings at the concluding gathering held at the Examination Schools. The message received from the Prince of Wales as president summed up in felicitous language the aims and prospects of the cause of science, the advancement of which it is the object of the Association to promote. The message also conveyed, in graceful terms, the president's appreciation of, and thanks for, the efforts made by all concerned to render the Oxford meeting of 1926 one of the most successful in the records of the Association. The reply read by Sir Oliver Lodge as chairman gave due expression to the gratitude felt by the members assembled at Oxford for the keen personal interest and sympathy shown by the Prince in the work of the Association, notably in his inaugural address.

The speech delivered by Sir Oliver Lodge bore eloquent testimony to the world-wide charm exercised by Oxford over all who can be touched by the long history of western civilisation and culture. The well-known eulogy by Matthew Arnold, marked by graceful fancy and poetic feeling, and not without a light suggestion of penetrating humour, came with especial force and acceptance from one so capable of giving it its full effect as Sir Oliver Lodge. The significance of the presence of guests from overseas and from foreign countries had been emphasised by the Prince in his message, and was driven further home by the chairman of the meeting. The speeches of Prof. M'Murich and Prof. Osborn, the latter of which concluded the meeting, showed that they too, as visitors and guests from overseas and abroad, fully appreciated the claim of science for international co-operation and fellowship. The final meeting at the schools was especially well attended, and formed an excellent conclusion to a very successful gathering.

AMONG several interesting papers presented to the Chemistry Section of the British Association at Oxford was a contribution by Mr. J. J. Manley on "The

Union of Mercury and Helium." Judging by a lengthy report of Mr. Manley's paper in the *Times* for August 11, the author does not appear to have carried his investigations beyond the stage described in his letter to *NATURE* of April 24 last, except that he now believes that only one helide— $\text{HgHe}$ —is formed, whereas in the letter he stated that he had obtained experimental evidence of the existence of two— $\text{HgHe}_{10}$  and  $\text{HgHe}$ . The evidence for union appears to be based upon the disappearance of free helium when it is submitted to the action of the electric glow discharge in contact with purified mercury, and upon a slight increase in refractive index as the action proceeds. The presumed compound is apparently decomposed by heat, so that its composition could be deduced from the difference in weight of 'uncombined' mercury before and after the experiment. As this difference is exceedingly small—of the order of 236 millionths of a gram—it is clear that Mr. Manley is encountering very great experimental difficulties; and bearing in mind the somewhat similar work of Miethe and Stammreich on the alleged transmutation of mercury into gold (*NATURE*, May 29, 1926), it is obvious that further investigation is required to dissipate or confirm the doubts that are held concerning the author's conclusions. Should those doubts be dissipated, Mr. Manley's work will constitute a discovery of very great importance.

IN the issue of the *Times* referred to, a leader-writer refers to Mr. Manley's contribution as a "startling announcement," as if it were novel, but actually the claim was first announced by Mr. Manley in these columns more than twenty months ago (*NATURE*, December 13, 1924). It is perhaps asking too much to expect a leader-writer, even in the *Times*, to be conversant with all that appears in our correspondence columns, but the incident directs attention once more to the need of adequate scientific representation on the staffs of our leading newspapers, and it also testifies to the value of the work done by the British Association in affording opportunity for lay writers to proclaim from the house-tops matters