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British Chemical Abstracts.<sup>1</sup>

THE appearance of the first index volume, covering the whole of the abstracts in pure and applied chemistry issued during 1926 under the direction of the Bureau of Chemical Abstracts, is a notable achievement. Marking, as it does, the completion of the first period in what promises to be a valuable co-operative and unifying enterprise, it represents a definite British contribution to the armoury of chemical knowledge and research. So far as the fields of physical, inorganic and organic chemistry, biochemistry, and chemical technology are concerned, few investigations of real importance, few new facts or measurements, few patents of chemical processes, can have failed to be reported in the abstracts on which this index is based. Since the rate of advance in any branch of knowledge so largely depends on an adequate acquaintance with the experimental results and theoretical views which form the starting-point of any new research, the efficiency of the abstracting and indexing service is a matter which closely concerns every investigator, teacher, and student.

Since 1871 the Chemical Society has undertaken, on a systematic and extensive scale, the preparation and publication of abstracts of papers in pure physical, inorganic, organic, analytical, mineralogical, and biological chemistry; besides the annual indexes, collective indexes have been issued covering the periods 1841-72, 1873-82, 1883-92, 1893-1902, 1903-12, and 1913-22. The Society of Chemical Industry has similarly surveyed applied chemistry since 1882, and has published collective indexes for the periods 1882-1895 and 1896-1905.

Naturally, a considerable amount of material appeared in both publications, and from time to time tentative efforts were made in the direction of collaboration. Real co-ordination, however, was initiated only in 1924, when the Bureau of Chemical Abstracts, composed of four representatives from each of the two societies, was constituted with the object of securing, so far as might be possible, unification of the two sets of abstracts. Ever since the Bureau was established, Prof. J. C. Philip has acted as independent chairman, and the new organisation has also had the advantage of the advice, in an honorary capacity, of Mr. A. J. Greenaway, formerly editor of the *Journal of the Chemical Society*. The regular staff of the Bureau consists of an editor, Mr. T. F. Burton, supported

<sup>1</sup> British Chemical Abstracts issued by the Bureau of Chemical Abstracts. Index, 1926. Pp. 430. (London: Society of Chemical Industry.)

by eight specialist assistant editors, each in charge of an appropriate branch, and a large staff of abstractors, as well as an expert indexer. The publication as a whole, composed of two sections dealing with abstracts in pure and applied chemistry, is now known as "British Chemical Abstracts"—A and B, respectively.

At the outset, the possibility of co-operation with the American Chemical Society with the object of producing one chemical abstract publication in the English language was thoroughly explored, but progress in this direction proved to be impracticable. The Bureau then proceeded, with what patience and persuasiveness one can only surmise, to secure consent to a common format for the two sections of the abstracts, and a joint index. Thanks to the Chemical Society's action in giving up its well-known octavo format, agreement was reached in 1925 and the new scheme was initiated in January 1926. From that date onwards both A and B abstracts have been published—the former monthly, the latter fortnightly—in double column quarto, the overlap has been eliminated, and the A abstracts (pure chemistry) rearranged and paginated continuously, whilst the type and set up of the B abstracts (applied chemistry) have been brought into conformity with the A section. The first year of this new arrangement has now been completed by the publication of the index part, consisting of 430 pages. It has been necessary to adjust differences in the two systems of indexing previously employed, and to deal with some 50,000 index cards, so that the Bureau may be excused if the publication, which is to serve as a model, appears later than was hoped.

The index *qua* index requires little comment. It is based on the nomenclature and arrangement adopted by the Chemical Society; it includes a list of patents and a list of the journals abstracted; but not, unfortunately, a formula index, that expensive luxury.

In two respects, perhaps, the service offered to the chemist by "British Chemical Abstracts" is such as to merit his special attention. In the first place, it offers him abstracts which are admittedly second to none in accuracy; it is the policy of the Bureau that, so far as is practicable, the abstracts shall be prepared by abstractors and examined by editors who have specialised knowledge of the subject concerned. The degree of detail permitted in the abstracts depends to some extent on the accessibility of the original publication to British chemists, but every new substance is specifically mentioned. In the second place, promptness in

the publication of abstracts is regarded as being of primary importance, and "British Chemical Abstracts," when compared with other similar publications, proves to have an excellent record in this matter.

According to the list at the end of the index, some 400 journals come directly or indirectly under the review of the Bureau's staff. It is of course financially impossible at present to spread the net so wide as does the corresponding American publication; moreover, it is doubtful whether much advantage would accrue from the inclusion of a large amount of ephemeral, borderline, and even non-chemical matter. A systematic survey of all possible sources of information is, however, made, and certainly there can be very little valuable information that escapes the attention of the Bureau and its staff. Much of the so-called borderline material is of course abstracted by other bodies—scientific and trade societies and research associations—the scope of which, although sufficient for their own purposes, is admittedly incomplete. It might conceivably be possible to secure some measure of effective co-ordination or co-operation between the Bureau and such organisations as would result in financial advantage as well as economy of effort on the part of the user. The Bureau would no doubt welcome constructive criticism, and give the most careful consideration to any suggestions calculated to enhance the value of its publications.

### The Peoples of Sarawak.

*Natural Man: a Record from Borneo.* By Dr. Charles Hose. With a Preface by Prof. G. Elliot Smith. Pp. xvi + 284 + 60 plates. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1926.) 30s. net.

THOSE who desire to gain some knowledge about the attractive inhabitants of Sarawak will find what they require in this interesting and informative book by Dr. Hose. All the information here given about the natives, and much besides, will be found in the "Pagan Tribes of Borneo," by Dr. C. Hose and Dr. W. McDougall. The serious student cannot afford to neglect the older work, but sufficient material will be found in the new book to satisfy most other readers. Owing to his long residence in the country, his intimate and sympathetic knowledge of most of the tribes, and his friendship with many individuals, Dr. Hose not only writes with authority, but also is able to handle his multitudinous facts with ease and to bring out the essential points of material