

operations in the past have been responsible for a very serious reduction in the number of whales. As a concrete example, the case of the southern right whale is cited. This whale, once inconceivably numerous in southern seas, has been so reduced in numbers that a regular industry based upon it is now no longer carried on. But, high as it is, the present rate of killing will in all probability be far exceeded in succeeding years as more up-to-date methods of capture, 'flensing', and extraction of the oil are introduced and perfected. In the absence of preventive measures, therefore, Sir Sidney Harmer holds that the hunted species are in grave danger of becoming so reduced in numbers that they may with difficulty escape extinction. To the Discovery Expedition, at present investigating the habits of life and ecology of whales in antarctic seas, he looks for definite information as to whether or not this danger is a real one. Should such prove to be the case, it is hoped that whalers will unite with naturalists in seeking some method by which such an untoward result may be averted.

G. A. S.

New Observatory of the University of London.

THERE are already observatories at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, University College, and the Drapers' Company Transit House, but there was felt to be need for further opportunities in the University of London for research work. Prof. L. N. G. Filon and Mr. C. C. L. Gregory were fortunate in receiving an offer from Mr. J. G. Wilson of the 24-inch reflecting telescope with which his father, Mr. W. E. Wilson, carried out many useful researches at Darramona, Ireland; the only condition attached to the gift was that the University should erect a suitable building for it.

The Hendon Urban District Council offered a site opposite Mill Hill Park, which has been leased to the University for 999 years at a nominal rental. The Senate of the University voted £5000 for the building, and four London colleges with the London School of Economics voted annual subsidies towards its maintenance. The building being near a main road, vibration of the soil gave some trouble, but this was cured by filling the space round the pier with coke breeze. A new guiding telescope with a six-inch objective by Cooke (focal length, $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet) was attached to the equatorial; the guiding eyepiece was mounted on a micrometer and position circle, to enable the telescope to follow moving objects. An 18-foot dome was constructed by Messrs. Cooke, Troughton and Simms, Ltd.; this has electrical driving, which can be controlled either from the floor or the eye-end. The Observatory has also a 10-foot Rowland grating spectrograph, fed by a celostat by Cooke, which can be adjusted either for solar or stellar work.

Prof. Filon is the Director of the new Observatory, and Mr. C. C. L. Gregory has the title of Wilson Observer. Students in the Faculty of Science in all the colleges of the University will be able to study at the Observatory, and facilities will be given for the investigation of new observational methods.

The general public will be permitted to view the Observatory on two afternoons in each month, except from July to September; ratepayers of Hendon will occasionally be admitted at night (two evenings per month from October to March) on making written application to the Director.

The Observatory was opened and the Wilson telescope unveiled by Sir Frank Dyson, the Astronomer Royal, on the afternoon of Tuesday, Oct. 8.

University and Educational Intelligence.

THE study of biology in the universities was one of the two subjects discussed at the annual conference of the universities of Great Britain and Ireland, held this year at the London School of Economics on May 11. One of the questions dealt with was whether the universities are sufficiently active in promoting the study of biology, and this part of the discussion was focused mainly on an appeal from the Colonial Office for university trained biologists competent to deal with the biological problems continually arising in the economic exploitation of the resources of various parts of the Empire. Commenting on this, Prof. G. N. Watson, of University College, London, emphasised the fact that for such work the narrow specialist is quite unsuitable, the problems in question being incapable of solution without wide knowledge and lively imagination. He outlined an appropriate four years' honours course. Prof. J. Arthur Thomson and others directed attention to the necessity of providing in universities at least three separate courses in biology appropriate, respectively, to the requirements of the medical student, the arts student, and the student intending to specialise later as biologist. The report of the proceedings of the Conference, including the discussion of the other subject dealt with, namely, university entrance requirements and, in relation thereto, the curricula of the last two years of school, has recently been published by the Universities Bureau of the British Empire, 50 Russell Square, W.C.1 (1s.).

THAT the barriers between commerce and public service are breaking down was illustrated on Oct. 7 by the visit of the Lord Mayor of London to perform the opening ceremony of the new extension of Messrs. W. and G. Foyle, Ltd., in Manette Street, almost adjoining the older bookshop in Chancery Cross Road. The new building is on the site of the old Goldbeaters' House mentioned by Dickens in "The Tale of Two Cities", and consists of six floors, providing accommodation for nearly two million books. A great bookshop such as Messrs. Foyle have built up during the past twenty-five years is something more than a commercial undertaking or, like Dr. Johnson's brewery, the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice; and this the firm have proved by their public literary lectures, the department of education films, and the demonstrations of new and classical music. Their public responsibility also extends to the destruction of worthless books, the number of which, we are told, amounts to ten thousand per week. Further, the machinery which Messrs. Foyle have established gives an assurance that accumulations of books of which executors and others have to dispose shall reach the hands of students and become again *fabrilia fabris*. That this is recognised throughout the world is demonstrated by the firm's morning mail, which in the busy season amounts to more than four thousand, and the number of books purchased is two and a half million a year. At the opening ceremony, literature was represented by Mr. W. B. Maxwell, who assumed the white sheet as representing the profession which filled these vast bookshelves; but Sir Godfrey Collins, representing the publishers, stated that his firm only publish three books out of a hundred manuscripts submitted. Messrs. Foyle's education department is especially strong with two hundred thousand volumes and accommodation for five hundred persons; and the same may be said of the periodical department, which claims to supply the back numbers of almost any periodical. The history of the firm is recounted in a book, "The Romance of a Bookshop, 1904-1929", by Gilbert H. Fabes, specially published for the opening ceremony of the new extension.