

Rice Grass and Land Reclamation.

THE economic possibilities of *Spartina Townsendii*, commonly known as rice grass, are described in an illustrated booklet issued by the Ministry of Agriculture (Miscellaneous Publications, No. 66, price 8d.). The grass, a tall rhizomous, deep rooting plant, occurs on maritime muds and was first recorded in England on the Southampton salt marshes in 1870. Its spread along the south coast has been very rapid, from fifteen to twenty years being usually sufficient for the conversion of waste land into continuous meadow. Propagation is effected by seed or fragments of runners.

The value of *Spartina* lies in the fact that it is particularly suitable for land reclamation and protection, and at the same time can be used for feeding to stock. The grass, owing to its extensive underground system, has the property of binding the mud in which it grows, and with the help of silting brings about a rise in the level of the land. Valueless mud flats can thus be brought into use, and sea walls or banks protected from erosion by consolidation of the mud in front. As food for stock, *Spartina* offers great possibilities. All farm animals eat it readily, whether cut fresh or as hay, and since it remains on its root throughout the winter, it forms a convenient reserve food.

The composition of *Spartina*, apart from mineral matter, is somewhat similar to good meadow hay, and preliminary feeding trials showed it to be fully digestible to sheep.

Experiments are in progress at the East Anglian Institute of Agriculture to determine the best way of introducing and growing *Spartina*, particularly with the view of feeding it to stock. The question as to whether it can be used most profitably fresh, or as hay or silage, are among other problems under investigation.

Although sufficient time has not yet elapsed for any definite results to have been obtained from the experimental plantings in Essex, the growth appears entirely satisfactory, and there is every prospect of its proving valuable to the farmer. In other countries of temperate climate *Spartina* also grows readily. The natural spread of the plant along the coast of France has been most impressive, and cuttings exported from Poole Harbour for experimental planting on the muds of Holland have rapidly become established. The plant seems likely to prove of inestimable value in the solution of the ever-present problem of land reclamation and protection in the latter country.

A feature that must not be overlooked when plans for the introduction of *Spartina* to an estuary are contemplated, is the inevitable reduction in the flow of tidal water when the plant becomes established. In certain circumstances this might adversely affect navigation or land drainage. Apart from this, however, the economic possibilities of *Spartina* appear very promising.

University and Educational Intelligence.

CAMBRIDGE.—C. F. A. Pantin, of Trinity and Christ's Colleges, has been appointed University lecturer in zoology for three years. J. E. E. Craster, of Downing College, has been appointed University lecturer in geography for three years.

Dr. F. P. Bowden has been elected into a fellowship at Gonville and Caius College.

RESEARCH scholarships for the encouragement of work in sanitary science are being offered by the Grocers Company. The scholarships are of the value

of £300 a year, plus an allowance for apparatus and other expenses, and are tenable for one year, with possibility of renewal for two or three years. Applications must be received by the Clerk to the Grocers Company, Grocers Hall, E.C.2, before the end of April next.

BIRKBECK College, which has since 1920 enjoyed the status of a school of the University of London, has sent us with its Calendar for 1929-30 the first annual Haldane memorial lecture, delivered last May by Lord Justice Sankey. The governors of the College resolved, on the death of Lord Haldane, who had been its president from 1919, to institute this annual memorial lecture in his honour, and the first of the series is devoted, appropriately, to an estimate of his work as lawyer, statesman, and philosopher, and the meaning, object, and value of the adult education movement which he did so much to foster.

THE annual conference of the Geographical Association will be held on Jan. 2-6 at the London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London, W.C.2, under the presidency of Sir Henry Lyons, who will deliver his address on the first day of the meeting. The programme includes discussions on the physical basis of geography in independent schools, to be opened by Mr. B. B. Dickinson, geography and the training of teachers, to be opened by Mr. T. Herdman, and lectures by Mr. H. E. Raynes on the mortality of Europeans in equatorial Africa, by Colonel H. L. Crosthwait on air survey, by Sir John Russell on agricultural developments in South Africa, and on national parks by Dr. Vaughan Cornish. The week-end will be devoted to an excursion to Norwich. The president-elect of the Association is Mr. B. B. Dickinson. On Jan. 2-4, a publishers' exhibition of books, maps, and geographical appliances will be open for the use of those attending the conference.

UNIVERSITY College, London, announces in its Calendar for the current session numerous post-graduate courses of lectures (open to students of other London colleges under the inter-collegiate scheme) and facilities for research in its faculties of arts, laws, science, medical sciences, and engineering, and in the Bartlett School of Architecture. Among recently developed departments of work in the College is that connected with the Ramsay Laboratory of Chemical Engineering. Here the bulk of the work will be of a research character and directed towards the elucidation of industrial problems. The Calendar contains a list, running to 28 pages, of original papers published during the past year in the various departments, the most prolific of which is the department of physiology and bio-chemistry, which was responsible for fifty-three original papers. Among voluminous appendices appears Sir Gregory Foster's annual report for 1928-29, a year noteworthy in the history alike of the College and the University as that in which statutes giving effect to the new constitution of the University were sealed and the new University Court and Collegiate Council were established, and the Calendar contains, very appropriately, an eloquent tribute to Lord Haldane's services to University education in general and the University of London in particular. "No man of his own or any other generation", said Sir Walter Morley Fletcher in recounting those services in the course of his address to the assembly of the faculties of July 4, "has done more to promote the growth of University education in this country." University College, having enjoyed for twenty-five years the leadership of Sir Gregory Foster, will shortly welcome his successor, Mr. Allen Mawer, who is to take over its administration as Provost on Jan. 1, 1930.