



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1931.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
International Health . . . . .	189
The Significance of the Seventeenth Century. By Prof. F. S. Marvin . . . . .	191
American Coal Mining . . . . .	192
Quantum Mechanics . . . . .	193
Inorganic Chemistry . . . . .	194
Our Bookshelf . . . . .	194
Letters to the Editor :	
A Method of Measuring Upper Atmospheric Ionisation.—Prof. E. V. Appleton, F.R.S. . . . .	197
The Meaning of Existence.—Prof. J. H. Muirhead . . . . .	197
Meteorological Conditions during the Air Raid on London, Oct. 19-20, 1917.—Prof. Alexander McAdie; Lieut.-Col. E. Gold, F.R.S. . . . .	198
Separation of Bitumen from Bituminous Sands.—Prof. K. A. Clark . . . . .	199
Nutritive Value of Benniseed.—Dr. W. E. McCulloch . . . . .	199
Determination of the Velocities of Projectiles by the Method of Light Interception.—James Taylor and Robert Wark . . . . .	200
Embryology and Evolution.—Malcolm E. MacGregor . . . . .	200
Use of Tungsten Arc Lamps for Photomicrography.—Edwin E. Jelley . . . . .	200
A Relation between the Radial Velocities of Spiral Nebulæ and the Velocity of Dissolution of Matter.—Prof. Arthur Haas . . . . .	201
Photographs of John Dalton.—Henry Garnett . . . . .	201
The Black-necked Grebe.—The Right Hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart.; The Writer of the Note . . . . .	201
Dimorphism of Long Chain Carbon Compounds.—J. C. Smith . . . . .	201
The Significance of Peking Man. By Prof. G. Elliot Smith, F.R.S. . . . .	202
Vitamin B. DISTRIBUTION AND PHYSIOLOGY . . . . .	204
Obituary :	
Mr. H. W. Monckton . . . . .	206
Prof. A. Leitch. By Dr. J. A. Murray, F.R.S. . . . .	206
Mr. R. G. Lunn . . . . .	207
News and Views . . . . .	207
Our Astronomical Column . . . . .	212
Research Items . . . . .	213
Cleveland Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. By Dr. Frank Thone . . . . .	216
Botany in South Africa . . . . .	217
Scotland's Testimony to the March of Evolution . . . . .	218
The Mechanics of Mountains . . . . .	219
Sinkage of Logs . . . . .	219
University and Educational Intelligence . . . . .	220
Birthdays and Research Centres . . . . .	221
Societies and Academies . . . . .	221
Official Publications Received . . . . .	223
Diary of Societies . . . . .	223

*Editorial and Publishing Offices :*

MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.,  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON, W.C.2.

Telephone Number: GERRARD 8830.

Telegraphic Address: PHUSIS, WESTRAND, LONDON.

No. 3197, Vol. 127]

International Health.

THE report on the Health Organisation of the League of Nations adopted by the last Assembly noted the success which international co-operation can achieve in technical matters. Co-operation in health matters is indeed relatively easy: there are few, if any, vested interests comparable with those which hinder progress in the economic or political fields. Health administrators, in recognising the essential similarity of health problems in different countries and in different areas, and the value to all of the experience of particular administrations, have come to recognise also the responsibility of co-operation and of placing at the disposal of all the special information and experience which some have gained.

The success of international as well as of national health work is, however, so closely connected with economic, financial, and social conditions that to select only one of these factors for study and action would be to invite failure. Such considerations alone would suffice to connect the work of the Health Organisation with the main stream of international co-operation which is developing through the League of Nations.

At a recent session of the Health Committee, Dr. Madsen, Director of the Danish State Serum Institute, who has been chairman of the Committee since its foundation, submitted a memorandum reviewing the present position of the Health Organisation in the light of its ten years' work and suggesting the lines of future development. The very success of this form of international co-operation, and the fact that certain branches of the work are tending to assume a permanent character, make it highly desirable that the work of the Health Organisation should be directed along generally approved lines of policy.

The study and collection of information is a branch of activity of which the Singapore Epidemiological Intelligence Bureau and the compilation of public health statistics are outstanding examples, and represents a phase through which every branch of the League's health activities, including even the activities of its Epidemic Commission in Poland in 1920, has to pass.

Investigations lead in due course to the formation of general opinions and the elaboration of certain principles and recommendations for action. The work of the Permanent Standardisation Commission in establishing and maintaining uniform international standards and methods of testing for serological and biological products is an example of

this stage, which is tending to assume permanency because such work must be continuous in order to keep in touch with developments of scientific technique and thought. Similarly, the lengthy regional studies carried out by the Malaria Commission in Russia, south-eastern Europe, the Mediterranean countries, and in India, as well as in the Mississippi basin, have led to an agreed general programme of anti-malaria measures; while the plans for epidemiological study and administrative action which are now under discussion will require at least three years to complete. The Sleeping Sickness Commission has already made some progress in the study of a disease which has hitherto defied the independent national efforts of African administrations, but a considerable period of international study and co-operation will undoubtedly be required before sleeping sickness can be brought under adequate control in tropical Africa. The Leprosy Commission, after a preliminary world survey of leprosy conditions, has, however, only just commenced its real work; and even certain partial studies, such as those on scarlet fever and diphtheria, are yet incomplete.

Such scientific work and the continuous liaison work with health administrations, notably the system of interchanges or study tours for public health officers, are, of course, the main feature of the work of the Organisation. Their development must inevitably tend to stress the third stage of activity of the Organisation, the initiation of action upon the lines indicated by the data obtained.

Primarily, of course, action is a matter for the individual health administrations, but in recent months the Governments of Greece, Bolivia, Bulgaria, and China have all sought the technical advice and assistance of the League Health Organisation in elaborating plans or policies for health reconstruction work. One of the chief developments of the Health Committee's work will undoubtedly lie in its collaboration with Governments seeking technical advice, and in the elaboration of a suitable administrative and medical technique.

The advisory opinions given in this way represent essentially a declaration of the present state of knowledge and practice in particular fields of public health. They are based on the pooled knowledge and experience of leaders in public health and medical research, and are, as Dr. Madsen points out, needed in a number of fields of investigation at the present time. Notably this is true in regard to maternal and infant welfare. The infant mortality inquiry has led to the collection of a large amount of information, and a general report on the subject

would be invaluable, not only to the South American States who extended the scope of inquiry at the Monte Video conference, but also to other countries anxious to organise national campaigns against infant and maternal mortality.

Here, as in the case of such social diseases as cancer, rheumatic fever, heart disease, against which sanitary administrations have been compelled to take action in the last two decades, an analysis of the reasons which have led different countries to adopt specific measures, the determination of the degree of agreement existing on such measures and of the points where diversity of practice suggests further investigation, would be of very material assistance. A series of reports of this type, properly prepared, would set out in detail the modern practice of preventive medicine and should furnish a basis for the study of the relations between public health services and health insurance.

Similarly, the survey of medical schools and education in which the Organisation is assisting in China is another field which cannot be omitted from the programme of the Committee, if its studies of public health conditions are to be complete, and this is notably true in regard to Colonial administration.

The growth and success of the International Health Organisation are of outstanding interest to all who are concerned with scientific progress. The Organisation represents a definite advance in international scientific co-operation. There seems to be no inherent obstacle to the development of international co-operation along similar lines by other scientific workers. There are, indeed, indications that this is a most hopeful line of advance by which scientific workers can assume their responsibilities of leadership. An international scientific organisation, as the experience of the Health Organisation demonstrates, is able to express a technical or scientific opinion which is too important to be disregarded and accordingly receives due consideration with the economic, financial, social, or political factors involved.

The lack of administrators qualified to evaluate scientific as well as other factors involved in social, political, and economic problems has been responsible for many of society's most acute problems to-day, and has not been without effect upon the course of the rationalisation movement in industry. It is at least possible that the development of international co-operation of the character represented by the League's Health Organisation may assist in the production of this much-needed type of administrator.