

Chemical Societies and Co-operation

IN his presidential address to the Society of Chemical Industry at Nottingham on July 13 under the title "Ourselves and Kindred Societies", Prof. G. T. Morgan discussed various aspects of the problem of reunion or co-operation among societies concerned with the furtherance of the professional and scientific welfare of chemists. The original territorial organisation of the Society of Chemical Industry in local sections holding their own meetings and other activities has in recent years been supplemented by the inception of subject groups, commencing with the Chemical Engineering Group in 1918.

Two such groups, the Food Group and the Plastics Group, have been formed during the past year, and this development alone is one which induces consideration of the relations of the Society with certain specialist societies and the possibility of such fusions or federations as was witnessed in 1882, when the Newcastle Chemical Society threw in its lot with the Society of Chemical Industry, and again this year, between the Food Group and the Society of the Food Industry.

An analysis of fourteen out of the sixteen separate societies concerned with the scientific and professional interests of chemists shows that the societies in 1930 had a total membership of 23,605 and a combined income from subscriptions of £46,557. Ignoring the fact that many individuals were members of several societies, the average annual subscription is thus about £2, the expenditure of which is divided as follows: 32.5 per cent for scientific literature, 6.5 per cent on social amenities, 6 per cent on library facilities, and 55 per cent on administration. This latter high proportion is attributed to the reluctance of chemists to assume such functions, and while paying tribute to the efficiency of administration of the societies generally, Prof. Morgan suggested that an important means of reducing this proportion of expenditure would be found in the societies drawing closer together and centralising or simplifying office appointments as losses from the staffs occurred through retirement, resignation, or other causes.

So far as the publication of scientific literature is

concerned, the main burden is shared by the Chemical Society and the Society of Chemical Industry, and the formation of the Bureau of Chemical Abstracts already represents a measure of co-operation between the two Societies which, by eliminating duplication, adoption of a single format and index, etc., has enabled them to deal with the increasing volume of literature which requires abstracting. Attempts to organise an Anglo-American scheme have so far fallen through, but if the fourteen societies could collaborate in technical publication and pool their financial resources, there appears to be every prospect of the Bureau being able to deal effectively with the steadily increasing number of original memoirs in all branches of chemistry, unembarrassed by financial anxiety.

Following this step of co-operation in abstracting, Prof. Morgan suggested that the publication of joint in place of individual transactions would be a further economy. The steps recently taken by the Faraday Society and the Chemical Society for publishing ordinary contributions to the Faraday Society and physico-chemical papers of the Chemical Society as a new joint journal is an example that might well be followed. Similarly, the possibility of a joint chemical newspaper which would replace the more ephemeral part of *Chemistry and Industry* might also be well worth exploring. This journal would be able to present a wide survey of current topics of personal interest to English-speaking chemists, as well as including progress reports and summaries of scientific researches, and affording a suitable medium for the publication of the jubilee lectures or the lectures now arranged by the Institute of Chemistry on modern developments in the main branches of chemistry.

Improvement of library facilities, research facilities, and vocational education in chemistry are other matters that might be expected to follow the reunion or rationalisation of the profession. Effective action can, however, only be expected when, as Prof. Morgan pointed out, the members of the individual societies face the problem from the point of view of the well-being of the profession as a whole and not of the interests of an individual society.

Sunset Glows and the Andean Eruptions

ATTENTION was directed in NATURE of June 25, p. 932, to a report from Johannesburg of sunset afterglows in South Africa following the eruptions in the Andes last April. Two other correspondents have been kind enough to send further extracts from letters from the same place. Mr. A. Stanley Pye-Smith, 51 Wickham Road, Beckenham, Kent, sends the following extract from a letter dated May 3: "We are having very wonderful sunrises and sunsets, as a result of the volcanic dust from South America. The sky glows red long after the sun is visible, while there are no clouds at all to catch the light, as far as one can see. It is a pleasant change to have prolonged light in this latitude where darkness falls so quickly." Miss Cecilia F. O'Connor, 402 Milton Road, Cambridge, has sent extracts from a letter, dated May 4, received from her brother, Mr. E. R. O'Connor, Germiston, Transvaal, which give more precise details, stating that "at sunset the colours are magnificent, but it is about an hour later when they are best. Normally at that time it is pitch dark. But now the western sky is lit a flaming red light to the zenith—as though there were a huge volcano belching out

volumes of fiery smoke. The red light is so powerful that everything catches a reflected tint, but yet you can see stars shining through, even to the west! What clouds there are, are etched in flame, and, towards the zenith, the red shades through purple to the ink blue of night." The same writer in a further letter, dated May 18, describes the sunsets as appearing to get finer, possibly because of the unsettled weather.

A letter, dated May 20, since received from Dr. E. Kidson, director of the Meteorological Office, Wellington, New Zealand, suggests that the volcanic dust had travelled on with the prevailing westerlies to New Zealand early in that month; it is probable therefore that the complete circuit of the southern temperate zone has long since been completed. Dr. Kidson describes the sunset afterglows that began about the end of the first week in May as very beautiful, ranging in colour from pale pink to yellowish pink in the western sky, the appearance showing a certain amount of structure suggestive of thin high smoke. Several reports of unusual manifestations of halo or corona have been received by his Department.