

News and Views

Warren Hastings and Science

MUCH has been written in the newspapers during the past week or so respecting the career of Warren Hastings in India, commemorative of the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth. Hastings was born on December 6, 1732, in Oxfordshire, and he died in 1818 at Daylesford, in Worcestershire. Little attention has been given, however, to Hastings' connexion with the world of science of his time. Six years after he had laid down office as Governor-General of India and had returned to England (1785), he was, on June 25, 1801, elected a fellow of the Royal Society. His certificate described him as a gentleman of great and extensive knowledge of various branches of science. He was living then in Berkeley Square, London. Among names appended in support were: James Rennell, Count Rumford, John Bruce, Caleb Whitefoord, and Mark Augustus Pictet. The first two were Copley medallists of the Society. Rumford's support of the ex-Governor-General of India is a particularly interesting feature of the candidature. In due course Warren Hastings attended and signed the charter book. It may be mentioned that in the last year of his administrative work in India, Hastings founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the first president of which was Sir William Jones. Though in itself nothing more than a coincidence, it is nevertheless of historic interest that the name of Capt. William Bligh, later (1805) Governor of New South Wales, who had accompanied Cook on his second voyage around the world, appears, along with Hastings, in the list of fellows elected into the Royal Society in 1801. His certificate was signed by Henry Cavendish and William Herschel, among others.

Centenary of Sir John Kirk

MONDAY next, December 19, marks the centenary of the birth of Sir John Kirk, naturalist, and exploring colleague of David Livingstone. Born at Barry, near Arbroath, Kirk was educated at the University of St. Andrews, graduating there in the medical faculty in 1854. He served on the civil medical staff during the Crimean War; afterwards, for six years as naturalist and second in command of Livingstone's exploring expedition in Africa. Entering the consular service, he became consul-general at Zanzibar (1873), and ultimately (1880), political agent. In the latter capacity his influence was of high importance in the administrative affairs of East Africa. Kirk accompanied the Sultan of Zanzibar on a visit to England in 1875, a treaty for the abolition of slavery in that potentate's dominions having been concluded. Sir David Prain has recorded that Kirk's memory is perpetuated in many ways: geographers allude to the Kirk Range, west of the Shire River; zoologists to Kirk's gazelle; and botanists to the genus *Kirkia*. Kirk was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1887, and the Royal Geographical Society awarded him its patron's medal in 1882. Kirk was created G.C.M.G. (1886) and K.C.B. (1890). He died on January 15, 1922.

The Dyestuffs (Import Regulations) Act

IN the House of Commons on December 8, an amendment for the omission of the Dyestuffs (Import Regulation) Act from the Expiring Laws (Continuance) Bill was defeated at the committee stage by 196 votes to 59. Replying for the Government during the debate, Dr. E. L. Burgin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, stated that the Government is still fully alive to the necessity of maintaining a flourishing dyestuffs industry in Great Britain, and referred to the definite cleavage of opinion between the users and makers of dyestuffs revealed in the third report of the Dyestuffs Industry Development Committee. This difference of opinion has been duly considered by the Government, and it is proposed to accept neither the majority nor the minority recommendations of the Report, but to extend the operation of the Act for a further year, during which period the Import Duties Advisory Committee will be asked to inquire into the whole circumstances of the dye industry and how the general interest may best be served. The whole matter will be referred to an impartial committee with all kinds of expert opinion available to it. When the Advisory Committee has reported it will then remain the duty of the Committee of Imperial Defence to intimate how the essential interests of national defence will be affected by any recommendations which may be made. The matter cannot be regarded as a purely industrial question. In the course of his speech, Dr. Burgin referred to the enormous advantage to Great Britain of the inclusion of the British dyestuffs industry within the international agreement between the German, French, Swiss and Italian makers. Careful inquiry has satisfied him, he said, that in regard to price the international agreement is not operating disadvantageously to Great Britain and the gold prices of the same colour do not vary to the disadvantage of the country.

Prevention of Distemper

THE inquiry into the causation and prevention of dog distemper started in 1922 has now been brought to a successful issue by the *Field* Distemper Council, Dr. P. P. Laidlaw and Mr. G. W. Dunkin, the Medical Research Council and the staff of the Wellcome Foundation at Beckenham. The disease has now been accurately defined and distinguished from other dog illnesses with which it used to be confused; it has been shown to be due to an ultramicroscopic virus and efficient methods of prevention have been worked out in the laboratory and confirmed in large-scale practical trials on packs of foxhounds and other dogs. Dogs are first given an injection of an emulsion of the organs of an animal which has died of acute distemper in which the virus has been killed with dilute formalin; in response, the animal develops a moderate degree of resistance which makes it possible, a fortnight later, to give it a dose of live virus which stimulates the animal to become definitely immune. The blood serum of such immune animals