

is common knowledge; here the extent of the depression is measured. Except for the wheat deficiency payments, the year 1932 appears to have been even worse than 1931. Of the individual farms the most profitable are the most progressive, those which aim at a high level of productivity and low labour costs per unit output; but specialisation, which would lead to the most complete mechanisation, is unsuccessful, for labour and by-products cannot be efficiently utilised. The general purpose farm is the one most adapted to economical production. The whole report gives a picture of economic laws striving to operate, but without their natural consequence, the elimination of the least efficient. The moral of it all is plain: overproduction of food. Whether the English farmer should be allowed to suffer as a result of what is after all a world phenomenon is a matter of politics. What is abundantly plain is that salvation is only to a very limited extent in his own hands. Mere increase in efficiency is patently not enough. In fact such increase, if world wide, will merely aggravate the disease.

Recent Research in Building Practice

THE annual report of the Building Research Board for 1933 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 2s. 6d. net) contains an account of several interesting investigations. The failure of lime-plaster ceilings on lathing, whilst of frequent occurrence, is not generally due to defective materials, but to hasty work and disturbance by other types of work in the building at a time when the plaster ceilings are very sensitive to vibration. Damp walls are often caused by penetration of rain through fine cracks between the bricks and mortar. Most colourless waterproofing materials are ineffective, but an imitation stone paint showed a good resistance to weathering. Experiments on heating showed that intermittent heating from 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. required only three quarters of the electrical energy for continuous heating, although the latter method has been said by heating engineers to be equally economical. Testing of bricks by exposure, and of concrete piles by an ingenious piezoelectric method, are described.

Science Abstracts

THE issue of the two index parts of *Science Abstracts* completes the physics and the electrical engineering volumes for 1933. More than 260 periodicals are dealt with by the editor and his 71 abstractors for physics and 57 for electrical engineering. Each volume has between 30 and 40 more pages than the volume for last year. 5,491 abstracts of average length 0.247 page relate to physics and 3,078 of average length 0.257 page to electrical engineering. In each case the average length is nearly the same as last year. Reference to the abstracts is greatly facilitated by the extensive indexes provided. In the physics volume the subject index covers 208 pages and there is a key to the subject index of 15 pages and an author index of 76 pages. In the electrical engineering volume the subject index has 109 and the author index 45 pages, but there is

no key. Each volume seems indispensable to the physicist or to the electrical engineer who wishes to keep himself up to date, but while every member of the Physical Society and possibly of the American Physical Society gets a copy of the physics volumes the Council of the Institution of Electrical Engineer, reported in May last that only 9 per cent of its members subscribed for copies of the electrical engineering volume.

German Association of Men of Science and Physicians

THE German Association of Men of Science and Physicians (*Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte*) is modifying its policy with the view of overcoming excessive specialisation. It is proposed to emphasise the tasks and problems common to many or all branches of science and medicine, and to promote discussion on these common topics on the widest possible basis. The annual meeting of the Association will last not more than three and a half days. The Council of the Association will only arrange the general sessions, the main group and joint sessions, and popular evening lectures. The general sessions will be devoted to topics in which some definite results have been reached or to problems of immediate importance. If discussion does not follow these addresses by selected speakers, the same theme may be handled more freely in joint sessions of sections. The Council will abandon the attempt to arrange meetings of the separate sections, leaving them to deal individually with the local committee. It has been the custom for some years past that allied and associated societies should meet at the same place, and either before or after the formal meetings of the Association. This custom is to be continued at the next meeting in Hanover (Sept. 16-20, 1934), and with the help of the local committee. An innovation is the *Zweckverband* of German scientific and medical congresses, the aim of which is to maintain contact between these congresses so that whilst specialisation goes forward they shall not be shut off from each other. The purpose of this union is to publish the dates, places and programmes of these congresses; for example, various medical congresses take place in April and May next.

Royal Geographical Society's Awards

HIS MAJESTY THE KING has approved the award of the Royal medals as follows: *Founder's medal* to Mr. Hugh Ruttledge, for his journeys in the Kumaon and Garwhal Himalaya extending over eight years and his leadership of the Mount Everest Expedition, 1933; *Patron's medal* to Capt. Ejnar Mikkelsen, for his explorations in the Arctic between 1900 and 1912 and for his work in Eskimo re-settlement on the east coast of Greenland. The Council has made the following awards: *Victoria medal* to Mr. Edward Heawood, for his work on the history of geography and cartography and his devoted service to the Society as its librarian; *Murchison grant* to Mr. John Rymill, for his work in Greenland and leadership of the party after the death of Mr. H. G. Watkins on his second expedition; *Back grant* to Dr. D. N.