

Scientific Meetings and the Public

MR. T. SHEPPARD, director of the Municipal Museums, Hull, contributes to the October issue of the *Naturalist* some notes on points of interest connected with the recent meeting of the British Association at Aberdeen. In a paragraph on "Lectures and Lecturers" he says, "We have complained over and over again of the apparent inability of many of the lecturers to give audible and understandable discourse"; and he refers to the plea made at the meeting by Mr. H. T. Tizard, and on many other occasions, for increased care by scientific workers in speech and writing. Unfortunately, some authors of papers seem to be unaware of the most elementary principles of speaking to an audience. If they read their papers, they speak to the desk with their heads down, and if they use blackboards or diagrams they turn their backs to the assembly. While research is being carried on into the conditions of good acoustics in buildings, and architects are criticised for not taking these conditions into consideration, many scientific men would apparently not trouble to make themselves heard in the most perfectly designed building; and even when a microphone is provided they turn away from it. In a communication to a scientific society, inability to speak with ease is perhaps pardonable when an investigator is presenting the results of original research to other workers in the same field. The British Association, however, "seeks to promote general interest in science and its applications". No technical qualification is required for membership, and every year the public is invited to join and attend the meeting. There are thus particular reasons why speakers in the section rooms or elsewhere should remember the character of the assembly they are addressing. Whatever the nature of the audience, however, if an author is not prepared to take the trouble to make himself audible and intelligible, he should not be permitted to irritate his hearers and his paper should be 'taken as read'.

Science and Social Reconstruction

IN the eighth Steinmetz Memorial Lecture delivered before the Schenectady Section of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers on January 10, Dr. C. E. Kenneth Mees, under the title "Scientific Thought and Social Reconstruction", endeavoured to assess the contribution which men of science can make to the solution of our social and economic problems. While the lag between a scientific discovery and its application tends to decrease and consequently the rate of change produced by scientific knowledge to increase, he does not think that the rate of change will continue to increase. It is highly probable that our social system is in an unstable phase, but after a period of rapid change in which the state of strain is relieved, it should settle into a new and stable phase. While admitting that the man of science must be actively concerned with the vast social and political experiments of our time, Dr. Mees does not consider it would be wise for him to take up the burdens of the politician. He believes that the chief contribution of science to social recon-

struction is the method and spirit in which the scientific worker approaches his own work of creating ordered knowledge which is then available for all.

THE transformation of technical industry in the last twenty years is due as much to the growth of the scientific spirit in all sections of the industrial organisation as to the actual laboratory work, and a like transformation in government is required. The use of the scientific spirit in Government would be effectively promoted by scientific men expounding insistently the nature of scientific thought and studying its application to our social and political problems. Discussing the part played by emotion in politics and the opposition between science and arbitrary authority, Dr. Mees insisted on the necessity for some appreciation on the part of men of science of the impossibility of leaders of a democracy being entirely scientific in their attitude. The transformation of industry already indicates the possibility of orderly evolution, and problems of social reconstruction could ultimately be dealt with in the same way as other problems, if men of science set themselves continuously to assist in the wise selection of leaders and in the education of the community as to the meaning of the scientific method and spirit.

Vocational Guidance and Juvenile Employment

THE National Advisory Councils for Juvenile Employment have issued a joint report on the organisation and development of the vocational guidance services in Great Britain (H.M. Stationery Office). The report gives the history of the national scheme for advising boys and girls on the choice of employment. The first attempt on a national basis dates from the Labour Exchanges Act of 1910, when special provision was made for young applicants. It is estimated that probably one in every four of the total number of engagements of juvenile staff is effected through the official organisations of the local committees for juvenile employment. The methods by which advice is given on industrial and kindred matters fall into two divisions—collective and individual. The former includes lectures, visits to factories, display of films and slides on industrial subjects. Individual advice is given to more than a quarter of a million boys and girls, so that roughly rather more than one in three receive expert advice before entering upon initial employment.

THE basis of all sound vocational advice is the alliance of the teachers' knowledge of the individual juvenile's educational and personal capacity with the industrial knowledge of the juvenile committees. The hope is expressed that there should be a reconsideration of the form of the school-leaving report so as to make it more adequate. Finally, in this connexion there is a survey of the experimental work in industrial psychology as an aid to vocational guidance. The principal published experiments are given in an appendix, and consideration of the claims made leads the authors of the report to the conclusion that "the application of psychological methods to