

Afforestation and Scenery in Great Britain

DURING the past few months, a number of letters and articles have appeared in the Press and in journals regarding the damaging effects of afforestation on the landscape of Britain. In some cases, the Forestry Commissioners have, rightly or wrongly, come in for adverse criticism on the ground of having desecrated some of England's beauty spots, notably in the Lake District, by planting serried ranks of conifers. We may assume that even the Forestry Commissioners have souls, and that they are not wholly devoid of the aesthetic sense; but they have a duty to perform to the nation, that of providing an adequate reserve of standing timber, and however great may be their desire to avoid any action which might seriously affect the beauty of the countryside, they cannot be expected to be entirely impartial judges in matters affecting their programme of work. Here there is more than one interest involved, and in cases where interests conflict, the wise thing is for the parties concerned to meet and come to a friendly agreement. We therefore welcome the announcement that the Forestry Commissioners and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England have set up a joint informal committee, which will meet from time to time and endeavour to come to an agreement in cases where their respective interests are likely to clash. It is hoped that this will be the means of maintaining the beauty of the country without seriously affecting the important work being carried out by the Forestry Commission.

Holly Lodge Farm

At a meeting on May 16 of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Unopposed Bills, the Metropolitan Water Board Bill was considered. Under this Bill, it is sought to construct various new works, including a reservoir covering 417 acres in the Staines area and another about 374 acres in extent in the Walton and Weybridge area. This latter will involve submerging Mr. F. W. Secrett's Holly Lodge Farm (see *NATURE*, February 2, p. 177, and February 9, p. 228). On behalf of the Metropolitan Water Board it was stated that the farm has been brought to a very high state of cultivation, chiefly by the use of artificial manures, and also due to the fact that the soil is of a certain consistency. It is not contended that there is no other soil in the country of the same physical consistency, or which could not be brought finally to an equal state of high cultivation. Indeed, if there were not, then this farm of 180 acres could not be considered to be of the slightest use to the nation. The arrangement is that the lessee of the farm shall remain in possession for at least two years, in order that, if he thinks fit to do so, he will have time to change to another farm on which he may carry on his very useful work. The Committee found the preamble of the Bill proved, and it was ordered to be reported for third reading.

The Green Flash

SINCE the appearance in *NATURE* of May 4 of the letter by Prof. Worley, with a brief comment by

Lord Rayleigh, on this subject, further correspondence has been received confirming the suggestion that "the green flash is by no means a rare phenomenon". Mr. H. Cary Gilson, Trinity College, Cambridge, states that he has observed the flash several times during the past five years from a point in Sussex 150 ft. above sea-level. In October 1933, while in the Gulf of Aden with the John Murray Expedition, "the flash could be clearly seen, with or without glasses, almost any evening", and was even observed from a port-hole about 18 in. above the water. Mr. Northcote Thomas, Grove Cottage, West Malvern, Worcs, has sent a summary of observations made from the upper part of West Malvern, 800 ft. above sea-level. He states that a flash or similar phenomenon was seen on forty-one occasions between July 25, 1934, and April 20, 1935. The flash was green until about mid-September; blue or green from September 17 until October 8; blue from October 11 onwards. On occasions the colour persisted for half a minute. Previous volumes of *NATURE* will show that the green flash has already received considerable attention; and index entries to letters on the subject will be found in vols. 93-95, 110, 111, 120-123. The comparative frequency of the occurrence and the change of colour to blue were referred to, and also its appearance at sunrise as well as sunset. The weight of evidence, and particularly the sunrise effect, points to a physical explanation of the phenomenon, which is accepted by Prof. R. W. Wood in a letter in *NATURE* of March 31, 1928 (p. 501), where he suggests that the relative temperature of the atmosphere and the surface with which it is in contact is the determining factor; a cold surface with warm atmosphere would increase the normal gradient of refractive index, and also the curvature of the rays, so delaying 'sunset' and affording "greater opportunity for atmospheric dispersion to come into play".

Memorial to the late Dr. W. C. Unwin

By the older engineers of the present day, the late Prof. W. C. Unwin will be remembered as an outstanding figure in the fields of engineering education and the practical application of scientific principles to the needs of civil and mechanical engineers. In his long career, which covered the latter half of the last century and the first quarter of the present, he witnessed the greater part of the evolution of engineering as we know it to-day, and in all the branches of the profession with which he was more directly concerned he occupied a pre-eminent position. He died on March 17, 1933, aged ninety-four years; an appreciation of his life and work appeared in *NATURE* of May 13, 1933 (p. 681). A representative committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Alfred Chatterton, of Unwin's friends and old students, supported by representatives of the Royal Society, the principal British and American engineering societies and of the educational organisations with which he was connected, has now been formed for the purpose of establishing a suitable memorial. The committee is endeavouring to raise funds for the founding of an Unwin scholarship at the City and