

### The Schools and Pre-Medical Studies

THE writer of the article on "The Schools and Pre-Medical Studies", which appeared in *NATURE* of November 2, p. 706, very rightly stresses the need for a common syllabus for all First M.B. examinations. He refers to the differences between the London syllabus and the (new) Cambridge syllabus as regards biology. He does not, however, mention the fact that this new Cambridge syllabus is the fruit of the labours of the Joint First M.B. Committee of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London. This Committee produced an agreed list of types to be included in the biology syllabus, "with a recommendation that each University should adopt a syllabus within the common outline". To this, not only Cambridge, but now also Oxford has subscribed. As a result, a schoolmaster will now require only a single course in biology to prepare a boy for the First M.B. at either Oxford or Cambridge; and if, as is very much hoped, the University of London sees its way to accept the report of the Joint First M.B. Committee, a great step will have been taken to secure that uniformity of syllabus which is so much desired. But it should be known that such uniformity is already in existence between Oxford and Cambridge.

It may perhaps be helpful to readers to remind them that the Joint First M.B. Committee of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London is a body independent of the Conference of Representa-

tives nominated by the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London, the Royal College of Physicians of London, the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Society of Apothecaries of London, whose report on the Medical Curriculum forms the subject of the article in *NATURE* of November 2.

G. R. DE BEER.

Department of  
Zoology and Comparative Anatomy,  
University Museum, Oxford.

To justify the need for a common syllabus, I was more concerned with the differences between the syllabuses of the First M.B. examinations of Cambridge and London than with the uniformity already in existence between Oxford and Cambridge. The fact that the syllabus issued in September 1935 for the London First M.B. examinations during 1936 is the same as that of previous years appears to afford little hope of a common syllabus in the immediate future.

What is wanted is a common syllabus for *all* First M.B. examinations, and it is to be hoped that the achievement of this aim will not be hindered by the fact that the two distinct bodies referred to by Dr. de Beer have each decided independently what that syllabus should contain.

W. J. R. D.

### Points from Foregoing Letters

A MARKED inhibition of the growth of implanted tumours in rats is found by A. Haddow when colloidal preparations of several benzanthracene compounds and of benzpyrene are injected intra-peritoneally. The same substances are known to produce cancer after prolonged application. The author points out that this behaviour is similar to that of X-radiation, which can both control and produce cancer.

Dr. A. Cohen describes the synthesis and structure of compounds of maleic anhydride and vinylnaphthalenes. These may prove useful in the synthesis of sex hormones of the equilenin and oestrone type.

Neutrons, apparently of medium velocity, from a radon-beryllium source surrounded by a 15 mm. silver shield, produced a greater activity in test pieces of silver and of iodine, and a smaller activity in silicon and aluminium, than that produced by the unshielded source. W. Ehrenberg concludes that collision of neutrons with silver nuclei may result either in capture of the neutrons with formation of a radioactive element, or in the transfer of energy to the nucleus (excitation) and consequent slowing down of the neutron. The reduced energy of the neutron is different from, and greater than that of, the neutrons slowed down by paraffin wax.

A table showing the radioactivity of ferromanganese concretions and deposits obtained from seas and lakes of the U.S.S.R. is given by L. M. Kurbatov. The percentage and the relative proportions of radium, mesothorium I and thorium X in the separate layers of the concretions may give an estimate of the rate at which such concretions are formed.

A mechanical relay and spark counter (for counting alpha and beta particles) is described by Dr. H. Teichmann. It consists of a piece of spring steel and a copper sheet covered with a thin layer of mica, and it is claimed that it has certain advantages over the similar water-jet device devised by Greinacher.

H. C. Bhuyan reports that the diamagnetic susceptibilities of chlorine, bromine and iodine vapours are temporarily increased on exposure to visible light. Only a small increase is produced by the red end of the spectrum, but this becomes greater at the violet end.

Prof. T. F. Dreyer enumerates the stratification of layers at Mossel Bay, South Africa, bearing various phases of prehistoric implements of Stellenbosch culture. He disagrees with O'Brien's correlation of the Stellenbosch culture with the East African Early Acheulean, because it would indicate that human history commences at a very much later date in South than in East Africa.

Phloridzin, a bitter principle obtainable from the bark of apple and other trees, has been found to inhibit the reaction between the phosphate radicle and glycogen, the sugar-like substance in the muscle, the oxidation of which provides energy to the organism. H. Kalekar now points out that phloridzin also inhibits another reaction, namely, the oxidation-reduction ('dismutation') of triosephosphate into phosphoglyceric acid and glycerophosphoric acid.

Dr. K. Mellanby and Dr. P. A. Buxton direct attention to the occasional emanation, under the influence of moisture, of a poisonous gas from rubber washers used to seal the jars in which living insects are kept. This may vitiate experiments such as those on the influence of humidity upon the tsetse fly.