

News and Views

Science in the Modern World

THE presidential address delivered to the Science Masters' Association, by Sir William Bragg on January 1 on "School Science after School" (see p. 78), was an impressive plea for the teaching of science in ways that will facilitate co-operation in dealing with national and international problems. The extraordinary growth of natural knowledge and the increase in community feeling, largely stimulated by the applications of that knowledge, are two of the great characteristics of our time. The school in its science teaching should therefore consider the community and not merely the individual and his own vocational and examination needs. The early members of the Royal Society, Sir William pointed out, unlike the fellows of the Society to-day, who are almost entirely professionals, specialists in some definite field of scientific study, pursued science as one of several interests. They were as much amateurs as they were professionals, and their scientific work was largely related to the welfare of the nation. In the pursuit of natural knowledge they found themselves always in touch with the world's affairs.

THERE is no splendid isolation for science, which indeed, said Sir William, would lose all its vitality if made to turn in upon itself. Science has always drawn inspiration from the attempt to solve the problems that continually occur in the nation's business, and the very necessity for specialisation to-day makes it essential for the chemist, the biologist and the physicist to keep contact if their own progress is to continue. Such contact often proves a great stimulus to further advance, and to-day alliances are also being established between science and industry—agriculture and other national occupations and interests. More than specialisation is demanded to-day, and because understanding depends largely on language, Sir William Bragg made a further plea that school teaching should see that while the scientific workers learn to express themselves logically and lucidly, others learn to understand the language and purpose of science. If in this way school science promotes the inclusion in one team of those representing many sides of life and their harmonious co-operation for the welfare of the nation, we need no longer fear the misuse or misdirection of the great powers with which science has endowed mankind.

Floods on the Continent

WHILE the peak level of the floods in the Thames Valley, reported in last week's issue of NATURE, has apparently been reached and passed, and the river, despite some additional rainfall during the week-end, is subsiding, less satisfactory reports are received from the Continent. Persistent rains all over France are stated to be causing the river discharges

to assume alarming proportions, the conditions being unparalleled for a period of a quarter of a century. The Rhône, the Seine and the Loire give particular cause for anxiety. Along the banks of the last-named river, hundreds of dwellings have had to be abandoned under threatening conditions, and in Nantes itself the main railway line has been cut, while whole districts of the town are under water, which has penetrated the main squares of the city, causing business activity to be paralysed. In the Département of Vienne, "the worst flood for seventy years" has occurred at Poitiers, where many houses have been evacuated. The Rhône Valley is again invaded: both at Lyons, at the confluence with the Saône, and at Avignon, there are extensive flooded areas. From Toulouse, a "catastrophic" situation is reported. At Paris, the Seine has been rising at the rate of eighteen inches in twenty-four hours, and has exceeded danger level. Considerable lengths of quay front are submerged and cargo handling operations are seriously impeded, where not definitely suspended. Water has entered the buildings of the Quai d'Orsay, and the Place de la Concorde is inundated for the first time since 1910. The effects of excessive precipitation are being felt with equal severity in Spain, in the northern provinces of which widespread damage has been caused and the town of Padron isolated; as also in Switzerland, where there have been a number of minor landslips, particularly in the Alps. The railway line to Chamonix has been completely blocked for some days by a mass of rock and stone. The authorities fear intensification of the trouble.

The Physical Society's Exhibition

THE Physical Society's twenty-sixth Annual Exhibition of Scientific Instruments and Apparatus was held in the Imperial College of Science and Technology, South Kensington, on January 7-9. Eighty firms exhibited their products in the Trade Section, in which many new instruments were shown for the first time. There were to be seen examples of recent applications of physics to a wide range of industrial problems, in addition to improved forms of the more usual physical instruments and apparatus. Four firms exhibited scientific and technical books. The Research and Experimental Section was again divided into two groups: Group A, illustrating recent research, contained exhibits contributed by research associations, Government laboratories and industrial and private laboratories, while Group B consisted of lecture and instructional experiments in physics. The annual competition in craftsmanship and draughtsmanship, held in conjunction with the Society's annual exhibition, attracted some eighty entries from apprentices and learners employed by exhibiting firms, or firms which have exhibited at previous exhibitions. The entries for this competition