News and Views

Retirement of Prof. W. A. Bone, F.R.S.

Meyer Medal for Plant Introduction

AT the end of the present session, Prof. W. A. Bone vacates, under the age limit, the chair of chemical technology at the Imperial College of Science, which he has held for the past twenty-five years. A graduate of Owens College, Manchester, he studied under Prof. H. B. Dixon and later, when lecturer there in chemistry and metallurgy, he carried out those classical investigations into the slow and explosive combustion of hydrocarbons which have done so much to elucidate the mechanism of their oxidation, and enabled him to formulate the hydroxylation theory. In 1905, he became the first Livesey professor of coal gas and fuel industries in the University of Leeds, and there laid the broad foundations of the new branch of science, fuel technology; there also, in collaboration with McCourt, he invented and developed surface combustion. At South Kensington, Prof. Bone was faced in 1912 with the task of building up a new Department of Chemical Technology, and under his inspiring leadership a research school of world-wide reputation has been created. His field has covered high-pressure explosions and gas reactions, flame spectra, the study by high-speed photography of flame movements in gaseous explosions, the chemical constitution of coal and gas reactions in the blast furnace. At a dinner on June 17, given in honour both of Prof. Bone and Mr. W. C. Hancock who is also retiring from the lecturing staff of the Department, a distinguished gathering including many old colleagues and students assembled, and suitable presentations were made. Fortunately Prof. Bone's retirement does not mean the ending of his scientific activities, for the College authorities, strongly supported by industry and other outside bodies, are providing a new research laboratory in which he will be enabled to pursue those investigations on which he is still actively engaged.

Société de l'Industrie Minérale : Foreign Members

At a general meeting of the Société de l'Industrie Minérale, St. Etienne, held on May 24, it was decided that the Society should, for the first time, elect honorary members, the terms of the modified statute being that "the title of Honorary Member can be given by the General Meeting to persons of foreign nationality who have promoted the mineral industry or the society by their works". The first elections under the new statute are : Sir Robert Hadfield ; Dr. C. E. Guillaume, director of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures; Prof. L. Denoël, professor of mining in the University of Liège; and Prof. P. Fourmarier, professor of geology in the The Societe de l'Industrie University of Liège. Minerale, which was founded in 1855, is one of the leading associations of French engineers, and has a roll of nearly two thousand members.

THE Meyer Medal of the American Genetic Association, for distinguished service in plant introduction, was presented on June 13 to Mr. P. H. Dorsett, who for more than forty-five years has been associated with the scientific work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mr. Dorsett was instrumental in bringing together the largest collection of soy bean varieties that has ever been made. Two expeditions to China were undertaken to make this collection. On the first trip Mr. Dorsett and his son, the late James Dorsett, collected more than two thousand samples from Nanking and its vicinity. On the second expedition, Mr. Dorsett and Dr. William J. Morse, soy bean expert of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, collected more than six thousand samples which were sent to the United States for test. A total of some two thousand distinct varieties of soy beans was obtained from these samples. These are being tested to determine their value to the American farmer. Some of them are already being widely used. The soy bean is a relatively new plant immigrant in the United States, but in 1935 five and a half million acres were planted with it, and forty million bushels of the dry beans were harvested. Mr. Dorsett also took part in three expeditions to obtain new varieties of plants to Brazil (1913-14) and to the West Indies in 1927-30. He was instrumental in bringing into the U.S. valuable citrus varieties and many rare ornamental plants. The Meyer Medal is awarded at intervals by the Council of the American Genetic Association for distinguished services in plant introduction. It is named in honour of the late Frank Meyer, pioneer plant explorer of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and had its origin in a fund left by Meyer to his fellow workers in plant introduction, who decided to use it for this purpose. Meyer spent the last nine years of his life in plant explorations in China. Among previous recipients is Mr. H. N. Ridley, who was responsible for the introduction of Para rubber into the East Indies.

Newton Manuscripts

AN interesting sale of manuscripts is advertised by Messrs. Sotheby and Co., 34 and 35 New Bond Street, on July 13 and the following day. Readers of NATURE may remember the "Portsmouth Papers", strictly a "Catalogue of the Portsmouth Collection of Books and Papers written by or belonging to Sir Isaac Newton", published by the Cambridge University Press in 1888. The then Earl of Portsmouth presented the scientific part of these papers to the University, and an influential syndicate of the University issued a catalogue of the whole, and took a copy of the more important letters that it did not keep, and returned these to Lord Portsmouth. The Portsmouth family, which has a connexion with Newton, has put the manuscripts, or such as they have now, in the hands of all serious workers, from Horsley to L. T. More. Viscount Lymington, the heir of the Earl of Portsmouth, has now instructed Messrs. Sotheby to sell them. It might thus seem that there was little except personal matters to find. Many of the letters have been published, accurately or inaccurately, whole or in part, in various wellknown sources. But the list includes, for example, such items as "three thick folio volumes", which we did not know of, relating to the Mint and containing documents in Newton's hand. It makes one leave in suspense the Cambridge report, that "Newton's manuscripts on Alchemy are of very little interest in themselves", probable as this may seem in itself, and though the syndicate contained one notable chemist. Also Messrs. Sotheby have added some celebrated portraits to their list. The sale should be well attended; for though most of the contents that are valuable are available, many would like a copy of Newton's beautiful handwriting and that of his contemporaries, apart from those that contemplate a more extensive purchase.

National Inland Water Survey

THE first Annual Report of the Committee appointed in January, 1935, jointly by the Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland, "to advise on the Inland Water Survey for Great Britain. on the progress of the measures undertaken and on further measures required and, in particular, to make an annual report on the subject", has been awaited with keen anticipation in many quarters, and especially by those engaged in the use and exploitation of the water supplies of Great Britain. It was scarcely to be expected, however, that during the first year of its existence, the Committee would be able to achieve any remarkable results. Its first duty was, naturally, to review the existing conditions and to ascertain the extent to which processes and methods in vogue could be adapted to some uniform and standardized system of procedure. The purpose of the survey, as set out in the Report now issued (London: H.M. Stationery Office. 3d. net.), "is to correlate the information at present obtained from all sources, to extend and increase the sources of information, and to make the information readily available for the use of the interests concerned". This has involved exploratory investigations in various directions and the issue of inquiries, which took the form of a detailed questionnaire (reproduced in an appendix to the Report) to which replies have been received from about 3,000 bodies and persons. The replies show that there is a good deal of information available, but that it is varied in type and date, is insufficient and lacks co-ordination and distribution-an endorsement of the conclusions arrived at by the British Association Committee in its report to the Leicester meeting, 1933.

THE present Committee has, accordingly, directed its attention to the means by which an improved system of gauging and recording could be attained. At the same time, it has been conscious of the desirability on economical grounds of adopting as gauging stations a number of structures not originally designed for the purpose, and of obtaining measurements from weirs of a type perhaps not best suited to the end in view. It is of opinion, as advocated in NATURE (Nov. 5, 1932; and again, Aug. 4, 1934). when the matter was first under public consideration. that the Catchment Boards of England and Wales. established under the Land Drainage Act, 1930, are the appropriate bodies to instal gauging stations on rivers and to make and record the measurements of the flow of the rivers which they control. The co-operation of the Catchment Boards has therefore been sought with results which are described as encouraging, and, as there is a large area in England and Wales not vet under the jurisdiction of any catchment board, the Committee has concentrated attention for the time being on areas for which Catchment Boards have been appointed. As regards underground water, the aid of the Geological Survey has been enlisted with the approval of the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. In estimating the value of the existing gauging stations for measuring overground water, an examination has been made of three selected rivers-the Nene, the Thames and the Clyde-and a section of the Report deals with each of them in detail. After setting out its proposals for the publication of data, the Committee concludes the Report with an expression of satisfaction at what it has been able to accomplish in the first year of its existence.

Britain's Largest Hydro-Electric Development

An aggregate of 102,000 kilowatt of plant is installed in five power stations in Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire in the south-west of Scotland. When the Water-Power Sources Committee presented its report in 1924, this portion of Scotland was defined as a place where there were possibilities of water-power development, but it was not surveyed as no commercial outlet for the power could then be visualized. The formation of the Grid, by providing the necessary power outlet, showed how a commercial application was possible, and the present hydroelectric scheme was developed as an important factor in the Central Scotland Grid scheme. In the Electrical Times for June 25 there is a detailed account of this scheme, called the Galloway Water Power Scheme, which generates the greatest amount of hydroelectric power of any station in Great Britain. In any power scheme the peak units are by far the most expensive. With steam generation, for example, a large amount of plant capacity has to be provided to cover the period of maximum demand. Daily peaks also occurring at regular intervals are expensive owing to the stand-by coal required. In these circumstances, we can see that hydro-electric plant, which can pick up and drop load at very short notice either in normal operation or in emergency, is a very valuable asset. The Galloway undertaking is unique amongst power stations, as it was planned and carried out as a peak load station instead of supplying the usual basic load. It has already proved valuable