

iron-bacteria have been known to occur, and the importance of taking drinking water direct from the main, and of keeping household cisterns covered. The Museum is indebted to the staff of the Water Examination Department of the Metropolitan Water Board for help in the preparation of this exhibit.

#### The Aquarium of the New York Zoological Society

THE fortieth annual report of the New York Zoological Society (June 1936) contains a report on the aquarium, written by the assistant director, Mr. Charles M. Breder, jun. There has been much activity both in improving equipment and collecting fishes and invertebrates for the aquarium. Besides this, many fishes have been hatched, including whitefish, Chinook salmon, rainbow trout and muskallunge, and the young handed over to the New York City Water Department for distribution in public waters. Studies on the nature of electrical energy discharged by such fishes as the electric eel were continued by Mr. Coates. After many experiments, it was found that the electricity discharged by an eel could be made to light a neon tube, and this led to a daily demonstration for the benefit of the public. Mr. Breder himself is studying details of reproductive habits of fishes, including five species of sunfish, the stickleback, *Apeltes quadracus*, and the catfish, *Villarius catus*, and has published several papers on this subject. Besides work by the staff, a number of visitors have made use of the aquarium facilities during the year.

#### The Parliamentary Science Committee

THE annual general meeting of the Parliamentary Science Committee was held at the House of Commons on November 26, the Earl of Dudley presiding. The officers elected for the ensuing year were: *President*, The Earl of Dudley; *Chairman*, Sir Arnold Wilson; *Vice-Chairman*, Prof. B. W. Holman; and *Hon. Secretary and Treasurer*, Mr. H. W. J. Stone. According to the annual report, four more institutions were affiliated to the Committee during 1936, and others have the subject under consideration. The total aggregate membership of the affiliated institutions now exceeds 100,000. During the last session, the Committee was active in approaching Government departments, and in promoting questions in Parliament on a variety of topics. The outstanding feature of the year's work has been the consideration of a memorandum how best to finance and develop scientific and industrial research. The investigations into this subject have not yet been completed. During the past year the following members of parliament have joined the Committee: Lord Melchett, Prof. J. Graham Kerr, Mr. Andrew MacLaren and Sir Philip Dawson.

#### Bright Fireball of November 14

At about 8.45 p.m. on November 14, a very bright fireball was seen by a number of people in different parts of Ireland. All the accounts agree in describing it as extremely brilliant, showing lights of various colours—white, blue, and red—and moving fairly

slowly earthwards. Some of those who saw it allege that it lighted up the country, a road being visible for half a mile ahead, or the earth being as bright as day. Many people were terrified by the apparition, and one girl collapsed with fright. Most of the accounts come from Dublin and Wicklow, but it was also seen in Co. Tipperary, and a correspondent there describes it in terms almost similar to those used by others in eastern Ireland, namely, "it seemed very close at hand and lighted the whole place up". A report from Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland, asserts that three minutes after its disappearance a dull rumbling noise like distant thunder was heard. No one has given its position at beginning or ending with reference to the stars; indeed it does not appear that any stars were visible, at least for the observers in eastern Ireland. For this reason it is quite impossible to compute its path. Judging by the vague descriptions of its direction, it was probably falling nearly vertically somewhere about the middle of Ireland, probably a little towards the west.

#### Three Large Sunspots

A CONSPICUOUS feature of present solar activity is the appearance on the disk at the same time of three large sunspots, each being visible to the naked eye. Foggy weather in London and elsewhere on November 28 provided almost ideal conditions for direct observation without a telescope, and a number of people, who were previously quite unaware of the existence of the spots, discovered them independently for themselves. From a photograph obtained at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, on November 27, the following data are derived:

Date on Disk	Central Meridian Passage	Latitude	Area
Nov. 23–Dec. 5	Nov. 29.3	17° N.	1400
Nov. 23–Dec. 5	Nov. 29.4	11° S.	1000
Nov. 25–Dec. 8	Dec. 2.2	14° S.	1400

Areas are corrected for foreshortening and are given in millionths of the sun's visible hemisphere.

Under favourable conditions, a single spot of area 500 millionths may be detected without a telescope. Including the three present spots, nineteen naked-eye spots have already been recorded this year. Since the frequency curve of these large spots approximates closely to the more representative curve given by all spots or by their mean daily area, an even greater number of large spots may be expected in 1937–38, the epoch of the anticipated maximum of the present 11-year cycle.

#### The Night Sky in December

ON December 22<sup>d</sup> 0<sup>h</sup> the sun enters, at the winter solstice, the sign Capricornus; in the latitude of London the nights are then 16½ hours in duration. The moon is new on December 13 at 23½<sup>h</sup> and full on December 28<sup>d</sup> 4<sup>h</sup> U.T. At new moon an annular eclipse of the sun is visible in the antipodes (local time December 14)—the central line, along which the duration of annularity is 5½–7½ min., crossing