

part in the proceedings and discussions are Sir Alfred Zimmern, Sir Arthur Salter, Lord Lothian, the Warden of All Souls, and Sir Donald Cameron. A number of anthropologists have been invited to join in the discussions and talks, dealing with problems affecting administration in different regions and from different aspects. About one hundred and seventy officers on leave have intimated their intention of attending the School. Although not 'official', the School has had the cordial support and assistance of the Colonial Office.

An Astronomical Jubilee

LA SOCIÉTÉ ASTRONOMIQUE DE FRANCE, the creation of Camille Flammarion, who did so much to popularize astronomy in France, has recently celebrated its jubilee. The chief event in the festivities which were held to commemorate the occasion was a great reception on June 16 in the Great Theatre of the Sorbonne, at which nearly three thousand people were present; the President of the French Republic attended and the Minister of Education, M. Jean Zay, presided. M. Jules Baillaud, the present president of the Society, gave an account of the history of the Society and of the work done for it successively by Camille Flammarion and his widow. After a short address by the Minister of Education, Prof. C. Fabry gave a charming account of the progress or revolution in the astronomical outlook in the past fifty years, and some beautiful slides which had been taken by Mr. Ritchey and by M. de Kerolry at Fourcalquier were shown by M. Baldet. A film was shown of Camille Flammarion's activities in connexion with the Society, and a recorded speech of his was repeated to the audience. A concert followed in which artists from the Opera assisted, while at an earlier stage artists from the Comédie-Française and elsewhere recited poems and read extracts from Camille Flammarion's works. A memorable evening, such as could scarcely have been held anywhere outside Paris, concluded with some ballets danced by pupils of the late Loie Fuller.

THE celebrations were attended by astronomers from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Great Britain, Italy and the United States to add their greetings and congratulations to the Society, its president and its secretary, Madame Camille Flammarion. Opportunity was taken of the presence of many astronomers in Paris for a discussion on various aspects of the problem of interstellar matter in space, which is to be the subject of a conference in Paris on July 11-17 at the Institut Henri-Poincaré. Messrs. M. G. Darmois, J. Baillaud, Lacroute, F. Perrin, Chalonge, Barbier and Mineur gave an account of the present state of our knowledge on interstellar calcium, absorption in space, the structure of the galaxy, the nature and distribution of absorbing clouds and their effect on stellar spectra and colour indices.

Covent Garden Laboratory

FOR the last eleven years, contact has been maintained between the work of the Department of

Scientific and Industrial Research on the transport and storage of food and an important branch of industry through the Department's Covent Garden Laboratory in Endell Street, London. This Laboratory has provided an excellent place for keeping under survey the condition of produce passing through our markets generally and for diagnosing or tracing to their source the different types of wastage and deterioration in fruit and vegetables. Samples of fruits showing wastage or abnormal features are collected from the market or are brought to the Laboratory by salesmen. Often the trouble can be diagnosed at once, but sometimes it is desirable to get the diagnosis confirmed by the Low Temperature Research Station at Cambridge or the Ditton Laboratory. The Covent Garden Laboratory also receives for examination samples of consignments of fruits new or comparatively new to Great Britain, such as mangoes, mangosteens and papaws. The interest taken in this work has now made it necessary to leave Endell Street for larger premises, which were opened by Sir Frank Smith on June 28. These are situated on the top floor of Nos. 9-13 Kean Street.

THE new accommodation includes two chemical laboratories, a large 'ice box' for cooling fruit to -30° F. and three cold stores. One, maintained at 34° F., will be used for delaying ripening and for observations on apples; another at 45° F. for work on citrus fruits, and the third at 65° F. will be used as a conditioning room for initiating ripening. The two colder stores will also be used for studying the advantages of temporary cold storage for wholesalers or retailers, that is, storage of, say, mushrooms and melons for short periods. In the chemical laboratories estimations of the sugar and acid content of the fruit will be carried out. The sugar content of apples, of course, varies between individual specimens, and to get a representative sample the apples are frozen solid and then ground up into a fine powder. Another important measurement to be made is the rate of respiration of the fruit. This not only gives an indication of the age of the apple, but also is important in connexion with research which is being carried out on the mechanism by which sugar breaks down to carbon dioxide. The alcohol content of apples increases as they grow older, and this is also a subject of measurement, as it is hoped that this factor will prove an important diagnostic indication. Produce from the Empire overseas is inspected before being shipped in order that nothing may be exported which is not up to standard. Facilities will be available at the new Laboratory for officers of the Dominions and Colonies engaged in following up this work.

Medicine Stamp Duties

DUTIES in respect of medicines were first imposed so far back as 1783. The tax then was twofold, as it is to-day. It was imposed on all persons who sold medicines, not being doctors, apothecaries, etc., and secondly a duty was 'laid on the medicines' themselves when sold by such persons. A Select Committee

was appointed in November 1936 to consider the duties of excise chargeable under the Acts of 1802, 1804 and 1812, and any amendments thereto, and to report thereon and to make recommendations, and its report has now been issued (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1937; price 3*d.* net). Complete abolition of these duties has been advocated, but the Committee recommends that the duties ought to continue and should apply to a wider field, and bring in a much larger revenue. At the same time, it recommends that the duty should be at the rate of twopence instead of threepence in the shilling, and should be graduated less steeply. The recommendations are of a far-reaching character, and bring in everything that looks like a drug or smells like one. As drafted, it would even seem that medicines prescribed or dispensed by medical practitioners are included, though it can scarcely be believed that this was intended. The Committee also sees no reason why the "modern chemist" should have "a very valuable preference" in the sale of preparations which claim the "known, admitted, and approved remedy" exemption which has hitherto enabled them to sell unstamped certain types of preparations liable to duty if sold by ordinary shopkeepers. Despite defects, the recommendations are on the whole in the interests of the public, and with certain amendments should prove acceptable.

Acquisitions at the British Museum (Natural History)

H.M. THE KING has presented to the Museum an exceptionally fine specimen of a black leopard from India. The skin is very dark and the spots are scarcely visible in certain lights. In March 1936, Mr. H. St. J. B. Philby set out on a journey through the districts of Asir and Najram in Arabia, returning to Jidda in the early part of this year. During this trip, Mr. Philby made large natural history collections which he has presented to the Museum. Apart from the birds which number 747 specimens belonging to some 100 species, the collections include mammals, reptiles, fishes, mollusca, a large number of insects, 230 botanical specimens, some minerals, and about 400 rocks. Among the birds, three are new to science, namely, a race of the common magpie, a small Scops owl, and an emerald cuckoo. His collection includes a number of eggs previously unknown. The Department of Entomology has received from Mrs. Tillyard a collection of 500 mayflies and 700 dragonflies which formed part of the late Dr. R. J. Tillyard's collection. Among the dragonflies are included the type specimens of 105 species, and among the mayflies of 8 species. This gift is perhaps the most valuable addition to the Museum collections in these groups that has been received for many years. Accessions to the Department of Geology include a collection of about 20,000 fossil invertebrates (including 60 type and figured specimens) from the Ordovician and Silurian strata of the Girvan district of Ayrshire. The collection was made by the late Mrs. Robert Gray of Edinburgh and her daughters. Mr. F. N. Ashcroft has presented a further series of 747 specimens from his collection of Swiss minerals.

Repton School Science Society

AT the triennial conversazione of the Repton School Science Society on June 25 and 26, some forty demonstrations were shown. In the biology section, a way of recording the heart beat of a frog and the effect of stimulation by nerves, by electricity and by drugs, was shown and also a collection of local zoological and botanical specimens. Recent developments in chemical industry were illustrated by the moulding of bakelite cups in a home-made electrically-heated press producing a pressure of 1½ tons per sq. in., by the manufacture of rubber gloves from the latex by a simple dipping process using an experimental plant, and by electro-plating and bronzing on a semi-technical scale. A lecture was given in the physics section on electrical illumination, dealing with the development of lighting from the carbon filament lamp to the modern vapour discharge lamps. There were also demonstrations of a way of eliminating dazzle from motor-car headlights using the new polaroid screens and of a home-made model railway fitted with a system of automatic signalling and train control.

Scientific and Industrial Research in Australia

THE tenth annual report of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Commonwealth of Australia, covers the year ended June 30, 1936, and in addition to reports on the five main divisions of the Council's work, refers to co-operation in research with New Zealand and to the meetings of the Standing Committee of Agriculture appointed as an advisory body to the Australian Council of Agriculture established in 1934 (Canberra: Government Printer, 1936. 4*s.*). Numerous reports to this Committee were furnished by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, dealing with such subjects as codling moth pest, survey of potato virus diseases, tobacco investigations, seed testing, weed pest investigations, soil drift, grasshopper investigations, etc. The Council also acts as a liaison with the Commonwealth Government on behalf of the Standards Association of Australia, and in this capacity provided reports on standardization of wearing parts of agricultural machinery, primary products, dusting sulphur, wire-netting and other galvanized products. During the year, the activities of the Council were extended to cover investigations into the problems of Australia's secondary industries, and a special committee has been set up to define the field and make recommendations regarding problems for investigation and the staff and organization required. A new Forest Products Laboratory approached completion during the year. This Division completed a full investigation of the veneer and plywood industry in Queensland with special reference to gluing practice, which has already led to a marked improvement in the quality of the products.

THE Division of Plant Industry has been responsible for work on the control of downy mildew of tobacco by benzene vapour in covered seed beds; this has made possible the prevention of a most destructive