

on the effect of heat treatment on chilled cast-iron and on the forgeability of metals. The Division of Biochemistry has been concerned with the development of a new system of combination vegetable tannage for sale and transmission belting leather. A microscopic method for the early diagnosis of bovine mastitis has been worked out by the Division of Pathology and Bacteriology, while other work of the Foundation has been concerned with the deodorization and partial hydrogenation of cod liver oil without destroying the vitamin content, with the incidence of diseases of apples and related problems, and with a process for transferring pigments used in the paint industry from aqueous pastes to the oil phase.

#### Desiccation in Africa

A SUPPLEMENT to the *Journal of the Royal African Society* of January entitled "The Man-made Desert in Africa: Erosion and Drought" by Prof. E. P. Stebbing offers yet another warning that in many parts of the world drifting sand and eroding soil are beginning seriously to clog the wheels of administrative machinery. Erosion is a matter in which African Governments interfere unwillingly, for effective control often means uprooting social, agricultural and religious customs upon which tribal life, which British Governments strive to preserve, is based. In this paper, Stebbing regards erosion primarily from the point of view of its effect on water supplies, and believes that with increasing erosion, a falling water-table and decreasing water supplies, the character of the rainfall deteriorates, wet years becoming less, and droughts more frequent, and of longer duration. When deterioration has reached what Stebbing terms the "intermittent rainfall stage", where continuous agriculture is scarcely feasible, man has his last chance to change his methods and prevent the final encroachment of the desert. Much of Africa seems to have entered upon this critical stage of deterioration, and some parts have passed it irrevocably. Stebbing emphasizes that now "it is for the Administration to act". The immediate needs for Africa's conservation are more money and more officers trained to the work. Given these, administrations might put into operation soil conservation programmes which, if carried out, would turn the scales, at or before the intermittent rainfall stage, against the desert's encroachment. The trouble is that we cannot tell, until we have tried them out, whether plans for soil conservation are compatible with plans for the harmonious social development of whites and blacks.

#### Grass Seed Production

THREE new bulletins have been issued in the Herbage Publication Series by the Imperial Bureau of Plant Genetics, Aberystwyth. Bulletin 19, "Production of Grass Seed" (price 5s.), is edited by R. O. Whyte and consists of an international exchange of opinions and experiences on the technique of producing seed of graminaceous herbage and forage plants. The countries represented are Scotland, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, the United States,

Germany and Sweden, the names and addresses of the contributors being supplied in each case. Bulletin 20, "Insect and other Pests injurious to the Production of Seed in Herbage and Forage Crops" (price 2s. 6d.), has been prepared by H. F. Barnes. This paper is essentially a summary of the available information concerning some of these pests, but although growers should find this most useful, they are nevertheless advised to consult the advisory entomologist in their particular area as to the best method for safeguarding their crops, as it is impossible to secure really satisfactory results without due attention to local conditions. Bulletin 21, "The Influence of Climatic Conditions on Type Composition", by Nils Sylvén (price 1s.), gives an account of experiments in Sweden on the changes induced in herbage plants grown for seed outside their proper growing districts. It is evident that there is considerable danger of loss of valuable characters if this process is continued. For satisfactory results, seed must be obtained direct from the breeding station or its vicinity, and care taken to keep seed from the original source scrupulously apart from that grown in a different locality, or much of the value of the selection work will be lost.

#### Education in the Indian Villages

A PAPER by Capt. J. W. Petavel before the Economics Society of Osmania University on September 24 last year emphasizes the value of educative employment in the economic system of the Indian village, and particularly that of the educational colony in Indian rural education. One of the greatest possibilities to be explored, however, is that of the use of educational colonies for town children and adolescents, and these should be for the benefit of poor middle-class people as well as for the working classes and should include secondary as well as primary education. Stress is laid in this system on productive work, and the scheme of factory colonies outlined is also advocated as a contribution to improved world relations. Both in the rural and in the factory colonies one of the primary needs is the co-operation of scientific men and other professional workers in leadership and on a part-time basis in teaching and other capacities. Moreover, the colony organization offers one of the best opportunities of dealing with India's root problem of increasing the productivity of the land to yield more food for her growing population. The establishment of a standing committee for unemployment and poverty problems, to plan and assist research in the directions indicated by the success of the Swiss labour colony of Witzwil, is also urged.

#### Report of the University of Leeds

THE University of Leeds report for 1936-37 records as the outstanding event of the year a gift of £200,000 by Mr. Frank Parkinson. It is significant that the report gives prominence to Mr. Parkinson's expressed belief "that the university can render the highest service to the community by keeping the realities of life and the need of breadth of vision in