

Garden, London. In it Maxim used the force of the explosion to work the breech mechanism, and for the first time produced a fully automatic gun. The Maxim Gun Company was formed in 1884 and soon it was supplying guns to many armies. In the 'nineties Maxim began his experiments with steam-driven 'captive' flying machines, on which he spent many thousands of pounds. He knew he was trying to achieve something thought impossible, and if he had little success he at least brought the subject of aeronautics into the limelight. Scores of distinguished men, including King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, visited Baldwyns Park in Kent and rode on Maxim's machine.

Like Edison, Maxim had but little schooling, but became a first-class mechanic and pored over such books as Ure's "Dictionary of the Arts". In middle life a short handsome man of great strength, he was as self-reliant as Ericsson and as fruitful in ideas as Trevithick and Bessemer. Traditional views were nothing to him, and, though he made himself familiar with what others had done, he looked at every problem in his own original way. He was born in the State of Maine, U.S.A., but after his visit to Europe he made his home in England, became a naturalized British subject, and in 1901 was knighted. He died on November 24, 1916, and was buried in Norwood Cemetery.

William Smith

At a meeting of the Geological Society of London on January 17, Dr. L. R. Cox, of the British Museum (Natural History), delivered a lecture on the life and work of William Smith, the Father of English geology. The subject was chosen for two reasons, one being that this was the session of the Society nearest to the centenary of Smith's death, and the second that Dr. Cox had recently had an opportunity of studying Smith's original notes, diaries and letters, which have not hitherto been made public. These MSS. have apparently lain unexamined at Oxford for many years, presumably since the death of John Phillips, Smith's nephew, who until his death in 1874 occupied the chair of geology there. They were recently discovered in Oxford in a packing-case by Prof. J. A. Douglas, the present occupier of the chair, and through his courtesy they have since been examined systematically by Dr. Cox. They are now catalogued and housed in a specially built cabinet presented by Dr. K. S. Sandford and Mr. H. A. Sandford.

There are many gaps and obscure passages in the existing records of Smith's life, and these manuscripts throw a flood of light on the activities of this great geologist. Apart from the outstanding importance of his contributions to geological science, Smith lived during the heroic age of geology. The MSS. have therefore a more than personal interest, and should contribute materially to the history of the science during this period. The only existing biography of Smith, Phillip's "Memoirs of William Smith, LL.D.", has long been out of print and is almost unprocurable. With the new material at his disposal, there is every

reason for Dr. Cox to prepare a full-dress account of the life and work of so worthy a subject, and it is to be hoped that its publication may not be unduly delayed.

Treasury Grant to Universities

It has been decided to maintain the Government Grant to the Universities and Colleges at the existing level, namely, £2,149,000. In reply to a question in the House of Commons on February 20, Sir John Simon said: "The Government are fully conscious of the vital part played by the universities in the life of the community, and of the importance of maintaining the standards of university education as far as possible in the strained conditions of war. Moreover the universities are making an essential contribution to the national effort at the present time in supplying personnel of the educational standards necessary for many national services, as well as in affording more direct assistance to a number of Government Departments by means of particular researches, the provision of specialized technical equipment in laboratories, and in other ways. I have satisfied myself, after considering the representations of the Vice-Chancellors and the results of a survey of university finance carried out at my request by the University Grants Committee, that the maintenance during the coming financial year of the present provision is necessary if the universities are to continue to make their contribution to the national effort, and the Government therefore earnestly hope that local authorities will take similar action."

British and French Scientific Co-operation

IN connexion with the recent visit of the French scientific delegation, Capt. D. F. Plugge, chairman of the Parliamentary and Science Committee, asked the Minister of Supply what arrangements had been made for regular liaison between French scientific representatives and the Advisory Council on Scientific Research and Technical Development. Mr. Burgin made the following written reply: "Regular liaison between the Advisory Council referred to and French scientific representatives is effected through the Mission Scientifique Franco-Britannique, which has a permanent Secretary resident in London, who will shortly be located in the Ministry of Supply. The Mission has contact with the whole of the French war-time scientific organization. There is, in addition, a direct link between the Ministry of Supply and the French Ministère de l'Armement, which can be used by the Advisory Council for matters relating to scientific inventions, in the form of a Ministry of Supply officer who has been appointed liaison officer in the French Ministère and will shortly take up his duties in Paris."

Physics in War

A SERIES of public lectures on the "Background to Present-Day Problems" has been arranged in the University of Birmingham. The second lecture in this series was given by Prof. M. L. E. Oliphant, Poynting professor of physics in the University. His