

Science Abstracts

THE reduction in thickness of the monthly issues of *Science Abstracts* during the last few months of 1939 will have prepared readers for a reduction of the number of abstracts in the volumes now completed for the year. Section A (Physics) contains 4,725 abstracts, a reduction of 7 per cent on the volume for 1938, and Section B (Electrical Engineering) 2,811, a very noticeable reduction of 22 per cent. Both have established for themselves international reputations as reliable records of yearly progress in the sciences with which they deal, and as indispensable to those who would keep themselves up to date.

Parliamentary and Scientific Committee

THE Earl of Dudley has been re-elected president of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee for the year 1940. The other officers elected are : *Vice-President*, Captain S. F. Markham, M.P.; *Chairman*, Captain L. F. Plugge, M.P.; *Vice-Chairman*, Prof. B. W. Holman; *Deputy Chairman*, Mr. E. W. Salt, M.P. The Committee has recently had under consideration the question of the release from military service of certain skilled technicians and scientific workers for other work of vital national importance, and also the question of suitable employment being given to technical and scientific workers who have enrolled for military service. At the next meeting of the Executive Committee of this body the question of the collection and utilization of town refuse and waste products will be considered.

Earthquakes during February 1940

AT Kew, Basle, Chur, Zurich and Neuchâtel the registrations of earthquakes tended to show that the earth was seismologically less active than normal during February 1940. At Kew only ten notable shocks were registered during the whole month, the greatest being the three of February 7, 20, and 29. At the Swiss observatories, seventeen shocks were registered, though only nine sets of readings were sufficiently clear to obtain epicentral distances, two of these being doubtful. Distant earthquakes giving consistent readings were those of February 7, 23, and 29, the four others being much nearer to the Swiss stations. Fairly good readings were obtained at Kew for the earthquake of February 23 and at the Swiss observatories for that of February 20, but epicentral distances were not determined.

The greatest earthquakes during the month thus appear to have been those of February 7 and 29. The former, according to the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey in co-operation with Science Service and the Jesuit Seismological Association, on the basis of reports from seventeen stations, had its epicentre near lat. 52° N., long. 174·5° E., and its initial time 17h. 15m. 56s. G.C.T., with normal depth of focus. This point is immediately to the south-east of Near Island in the Aleutian Islands group and close to the undersea escarpment, where the depth of sea quickly falls to more than seven thousand metres, according to the U.S. Geological

Society map. Although the Aleutian Islands are known to lie along a seismic belt, the region appears to have been more than normally active since the 'missing' earthquake of November 10, 1938. The earthquake of February 29, according to the Zurich seismologists, had its epicentre near lat. 45° N., long. 27° E., which is in Rumania, approximately midway between Bucharest and Galati. On the same authority the earthquake just after 1 a.m. on February 9 had its epicentre near Mont Blanc, and the earthquake of February 23 in Albania. All the above epicentral determinations are tentative.

Announcements

DR. L. E. H. WHITBY has been awarded the John Hunter Medal and Triennial Prize of the Royal College of Surgeons for his research work in "Bacteriology with special reference to the Sulphonamide Compounds".

THE office of the Royal Society has now returned to the Society's apartments in Burlington House and the library is re-opened. Communications, therefore, should be directed to the Royal Society, Burlington House, London, W.1.

THE British Association announces that the grounds of Down House, Charles Darwin's home at Downe, Kent, will be open to the public free of charge from Good Friday onward, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

THE sixth Australian Medical Congress, which was to have been held at Perth, Western Australia, during September 2-7, 1940, has been postponed indefinitely.

THE herbarium of indigenous medicinal plants which is being collected at Calcutta under the aegis of the School of Tropical Medicine now contains 1,500 species, or approximately 5,000 specimens. It is hoped that when the herbarium is completed it will comprise specimens of all the 2,500 medicinal plants known to be growing in India.

DURING the first six months of 1939, 313,226 marriages took place in the old German Reich, or 10,122 (3·3 per cent) more than in the corresponding period of 1938 (303,104). In the second quarter of 1939 there were 11·2 marriages for every 1,000 inhabitants. In the same period there was a remarkable rise in the number of marriages in the former Austria, namely 28,490, or 8,921 (45·6 per cent) more than in the corresponding period of 1938. In the first half of 1939 there were 59,210 marriages in the former Austria, or 28,954 (95·7 per cent) more than in the corresponding period of 1938 (30,256).

ERRATUM.—Dr. Julian Huxley points out that the title of the substance of his British and American Association Lecture published in NATURE of March 2, p. 330, should have been "Science, War and Reconstruction".