

loss for addresses and sources of information. To meet this need, the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux has issued "ASLIB Guide to British Sources of Specialised Information. No. 1, Fuel and Allied Industries (excluding Electricity)" (2s. 6d. to non-members. ASLIB, 31 Museum Street, London, W.C.1). It indicates what new organizations have arisen and what modifications have been made in war-time. Particulars are given of relevant Government and other departments, professional, trade, and research organizations, university teaching departments and libraries, commercial and industrial organizations, periodicals printing abstracts and references, trade periodicals, periodicals issued by professional bodies and industrial concerns, and annuals. The list is comprehensive, and a perusal failed to note the omission of any address or paper concerned with fuels in war-time. It should find a useful place on the table of everyone concerned with administration or investigation of fuel affairs in these times.

#### William Withering and Erasmus Darwin

THE June issue of the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* contains an interesting notice by Drs. Ruth Musser and John C. Krantz, jun., on the friendship of William Withering and Erasmus Darwin. In 1775, nine years after graduating as M.D. at Edinburgh, Withering, who was in practice at Birmingham, became intimately associated with Erasmus Darwin, an Edinburgh doctor of medicine ten years his senior, and was admitted by him to the Lunar Society which Darwin and others had founded. The outstanding members of this Society were James Watt, Joseph Priestley and Josiah Wedgwood, and the visitors included among others Herschel and Benjamin Franklin. The friendship of Darwin and Withering continued for many years. Each enjoyed a wide reputation and an extensive practice. The greatest contribution which Withering made to posterity was his use of the purple foxglove in the treatment of dropsy, the description of which is to be found in his classical work published in 1785 entitled "The Foxglove, an Account of its Medical Properties", while of Darwin it has been said that there was scarcely an invention in the world to-day that his mind did not foresee. Withering died in 1799 at the relatively early age of fifty-three, but Darwin survived until 1802, or seven years before the birth of his grandson, the author of "The Origin of Species".

#### The Newcomen Society

THE Newcomen Society has recently published vol. 19 of its *Transactions*, its sixth *Quarterly Bulletin* and its programme of papers for the session 1940-41. Seven meetings have been arranged, and the papers to be presented deal with the history of many subjects, among these being the sugar-cane industry, the iron industry, Henry Cort's bicentenary, the Surrey iron railway, needle-making, wire and plate gauges and the hydraulic extrusion of metals. In the *Quarterly Bulletin*, reference is made to the movement in the United States to preserve the birthplace of Robert Fulton, and to the erection of a tablet on a

granite shaft over the burial place of Oliver Evans, in Trinity Churchyard, Broadway, New York. The 'pilgrimage' of members of the Society in America which was to have taken place in New Hampshire in June was abandoned on the receipt of the news of the defeat of France.

The new volume of the *Transactions* contains thirteen papers and nine other communications, together with a continuation of the valuable analytical bibliography of the history of engineering. The volume runs to 290 pages and contains twenty-four plates. Most of the papers were referred to in our columns at the time they were read. Among the notes and communications is a list of 320 engineering drawings dating from 1775 to 1840 preserved at the Science Museum in the Goodrich Collection, and a description of the first dry dock in the Netherlands (1707) by Lieut. J. J. Bootsgezels, of the Netherland Royal Navy, who, it has been learnt, lost his life through a mine when escaping from Holland. He was well known for his great interest in the records of Dutch engineering. The president of the Society for the current year is Col. C. E. Davies, secretary of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers; his address will be read in both New York and London on November 13.

#### Electromagnetic Levitation

AN exhibit which has proved attractive at the Centennial Exhibition of the Dominion of New Zealand is showing an aluminium plate floating in air in a strong alternating-current field and frying eggs in a pan without visible means of heating and support. An iron core is concealed beneath a table top and excited by A.C. windings so arranged and connected that they produce alternating magnetic fields, toroidal in form, of high intensity and opposite polarity. An aluminium pan floats on this field with such definition of position that considerable effort is required to move it downwards or sideways. Heat generated in the pan, by currents induced by the field, does the cooking. It is very suitable as an exhibit for publicity purposes, but at present it does not look as if it has any practical application, as a very large electrical input is required to maintain a magnetic field of suitable form and intensity.

#### Seismological Data from India

MUCH useful seismological data is contained in the *Seismological Bulletin* of April, May and June, 1939, recently published by the Government of India Meteorological Department. It contains interpretations of the seismograms obtained at seven observatories in India and Ceylon together with macroseismic data supplied by voluntary observers in nine regions. About sixty earthquakes were recorded at each of the observatories for the three months, though only nineteen were registered at the Haig Observatory at Dehra Dun. This is not considered significant on account of the types of instruments in use at the stations, a full list of which is given. The region near Shillong appears to have experienced more earthquakes than any other during the period, having had