

reference to higher authority, increased collaboration between Departments with the view of avoiding overlapping of functions, a re-organization of the remaining work so as to make the minimum demands on professional qualifications, and to ensure that work not requiring such qualifications is devolved on persons less highly qualified. The report also recommends that delays in the payment of increases of salary either as increments or as the result of promotion should be eliminated, and the immediate investigation of the alleged inadequacy of salaries paid to technical officers. The Committee regards it as fundamental that there should be a reasonable relation between the salaries paid by Government and industrial firms respectively.

### Agriculture in Northern Ireland

ADDRESSING a meeting at Ballyclare, Northern Ireland, Mr. J. F. Gordon, the Northern Ireland Minister of Labour, said that during the present year the farmers of Northern Ireland have surpassed all previous records in the production of food. They have increased land cultivation by 100 per cent, and obtained an agricultural turnover during the year of £44,000,000. After feeding the people of Northern Ireland and the troops stationed there the farmers have sent about £10,000,000 worth of food, including 360,000,000 eggs, to swell the larder in Great Britain. The Northern Ireland Ministry of Agriculture has pushed ahead with a scheme of potato processing plant, and it is hoped that nine factories will be completed in time to deal with the 1942 surplus crop, converting it into potato meal for animal feeding and into potato for human consumption.

### Depths of the Arctic Ocean

A NOTE on some important Soviet flights in the Arctic is contained in the *Polar Record* of July. In March 1941 Ivan Cherevichni, and four others, flew from Moscow via Archangel, Franz Josef Land and Severnaya Zemlya to their base on Wrangel Island. Thence several flights were made to the north to investigate conditions in the least known area of the Arctic Sea. On the first flight a descent on the pack was made in lat.  $81^{\circ} 2' N.$ , long.  $180^{\circ} E.$ , and for four days hydrographical observations were made. The ocean depth was 1,447 fm. The next flight was to lat.  $78^{\circ} N.$ , long.  $176^{\circ} 40' E.$ , where the depth was 1,015 fm., and the third flight was to lat.  $78^{\circ} N.$ , long.  $170^{\circ} E.$ , where the depth was 1,878 fm. In the Cherevichni triangle, made by these three stations, the depths appear to be considerably less than the single sounding of Sir Hubert Wilkins in 1927 in lat.  $77^{\circ} 45' N.$ , long.  $175^{\circ} W.$ , which was 2,830 fm. These discrepancies in depths were not expected in the Arctic Ocean. The physicist in the party found the intermediate layer of warm Atlantic water at all three stations. It will be recalled that this layer, first found by Nansen, was noted by Papanin, of the Soviet drifting polar station, some years ago. It is now fair to assume that it occurs throughout the Arctic basin.

### The Couvade

IN the recently published September issue of *Folk-Lore*, Mr. L. F. Newman discusses the curious but widespread and ancient custom named 'couvade', which consists in the illness of the husband during his wife's pregnancy, parturition and puerperium.

He classifies the theories as to its origin in three groups according as they are held by (1) the classical school, who follow Apollonius Rhodius, Strabo, Plutarch and the other early writers; (2) the historians, who base their views on authors such as Marco Polo, Bacon, Butler and others; and (3) the anthropologists, who are influenced mainly by scientific data and records from the life of the more primitive peoples. Mr. Newman comes to the conclusion that a number of quite diverse customs have been grouped together under the name of the 'couvade', and that many are not different types of one definite custom, but are survivals of recorded instances of separate customs and are of multiple origin.

### Standardizing Electrical Instruments

IN a paper read on December 3 in London before the Institution of Electrical Engineers, Lieut.-Col. K. Edgecombe dealt with the standardization of industrial electrical instruments from the aspects of performance limits, dimensional limits and certain constructional features facilitating interchangeability and promoting commercial manufacture, and other minor matters such as preferred terms, definitions, symbols, etc. Comparisons are made of the standards issued in Great Britain, the United States and Germany and by the International Electrotechnical Commission, suggestions being put forward for the extension or amendment of the pertinent specifications issued by the British Standards Institution, notably BS81, BS89 and BS90.

### Announcements

WE regret to announce the death of Sir Henry Miers, F.R.S., Waynflete professor of mineralogy in the University of Oxford during 1895-1908, principal of the University of London from 1908 until 1915, and vice-chancellor of the University of Manchester and professor of crystallography during 1915-26, on December 10, aged eighty-four.

DR. G. A. R. KON has been appointed as the first occupant of the University of London chair of chemistry tenable at the Royal Cancer Hospital (Free), which was instituted just before the outbreak of war. Dr. Kon has been a member of the staff of the Imperial College of Science and Technology since 1925, the title of reader in organic chemistry being conferred on him in 1935.

IT is announced that the estate of Sir Joseph Larmor, who died on May 19 (see NATURE, June 6, p. 631), amounts to £54,500. He made the following bequests, among others: £3,000 to St. John's College, Cambridge, for annual rewards for undergraduates; £3,000 to the Royal Academical Institution, Belfast, to supplement scholarships; £3,000 to augment emoluments held by junior members in Northern Ireland of Queen's University, Belfast; £2,000 to the University of Cambridge to provide medical and other assistance to junior members of the University; £1,000 each to St. John's College, Cambridge, and Magee University College, Londonderry; and £750 each to Trinity College, Dublin, and the National University of Ireland for the benefit of University College, Galway. Subject to other bequests, the residue is to be used for increasing the educational bequests to St. John's College, Cambridge, the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, and Queen's University, Belfast.