

Royal Society of Arts : Albert Gold Medal

THE Albert Gold Medal for 1943 of the Royal Society of Arts has been awarded to Sir John Russell, director of the Rothamsted Experimental Station. The Medal, which was struck in 1864 to commemorate the presidency of the Society held by Prince Albert during 1843–61, is awarded "for distinguished merit in promoting Arts, Manufactures and Commerce". Fifty years ago the Medal was awarded to Sir John Bennet Lawes and John Henry Gilbert "for their joint services to scientific agriculture, and notably for the researches which, throughout a period of fifty years, have been carried on by them at the Experimental Farm, Rothamsted".

Prof. K. A. Timiriazev, For.Mem.R.S. (1843–1920)

THE centenary of the birth of Prof. K. A. Timiriazev will be celebrated on June 3 at the Timiriazev Agricultural Academy, where the jubilee session will be held. Timiriazev, one of the foremost men of science of his day, was an honorary and active member of more than forty academies of science and universities. In 1911 he was elected foreign member of the Royal Society. His scientific researches were confined almost solely to the photosynthetic activity of the green leaf; the application of scientific achievement to practical life was closely bound up with his experimental work. He blazed a new path in the field of application of plant physiology to agriculture, in the field of science teaching, and in the field of the popularization of science. In 1908, Timiriazev wrote: "In the world-wide struggle between that part of mankind which looks ahead and that part which is fatally destined to gaze retrospectively, the following words will be inscribed on the banner of the first: Science and Democracy—*in hoc signo vinces!*" Science and democracy—this idea served also as a guide to action for Timiriazev; to him it denoted an organic bond between theory and practice, science actively serving mankind, and plant physiology at the service of agriculture. Timiriazev was a confirmed opponent of all narrow specialization, of the man of science shutting himself up in his laboratory so that there ceases to be a common language between the man of science and the community, and even between one scientific worker and another. But though specialization can be a serious evil it is essential for the development of modern science. With a very wide circle of interests, in his own research Timiriazev limited himself to one field, indeed to one problem. To explain the working of photosynthesis, the effect of solar energy on plants, was his life-work. The problem of photosynthesis was very clearly linked up for Timiriazev with general biology and his world outlook. He held that "the task of the physiologist is not to describe, but to explain and direct nature, his role must not be that of an observer but that of an active experimenter".

Copernicus Commemoration

BUT for the War, Poland would have commemorated the four hundredth anniversary of the death of Copernicus on May 24, 1543, and the publication of "De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium", by an international gathering of astronomers and others interested in the pursuit of natural science. In Great Britain the occasion was marked by a meeting on May 24 at the Royal Institution; the meeting

was arranged by the Copernicus Quatercentenary Celebration Committee, a mixed body of distinguished Poles and fellows of the Royal Society, and was attended by the President of Poland and members of the Polish Government in London. The meeting was opened by a short address by Sir Henry Dale, president of the Royal Society, who stressed the significance of Copernicus' contribution to thought, and read a message he had broadcast to a parallel meeting which was being held in New York. Prof. Stanisław Kot, Polish Minister of Information, then delivered an address on Copernicus, surveying the history of Poland during the Middle Ages in order to show the relation of Copernicus to movements of his times, and drawing a picture of university life at Cracow. He remarked that, before the War, books used and annotated by Copernicus were treasured among Polish historical possessions—their fate is unknown.

Prof. Kot was followed by Dr. H. Spencer Jones, Astronomer Royal, who recounted the main facts of the life of Copernicus and dealt in some detail with the significance of the heliocentric theory. Count Edward Raczyński, Polish Ambassador to Great Britain, expressed his country's gratitude for the way in which the Royal Society had assisted in carrying through the limited commemoration which had been possible. The meeting closed with a recorded message from Prof. Harlow Shapley, director of Harvard Observatory, in response to Sir Henry Dale's broadcast address. He spoke from New York, where a commemorative meeting was held in the Carnegie Hall, and mentioned that, in addition to other similar meetings, planetaria in the United States are showing special programmes during May. By such means, Poles in exile and scientific men of the other members of the United Nations joined in commemorating the work of Copernicus as one of the great natural philosophers of all time.

The Science Library, South Kensington

IN this War, Mr. Roosevelt has said, books are weapons, and perhaps it has needed an emergency like the present to prove the value of scientific and technical libraries to many who have not hitherto given them much thought, or seen the necessity for their active development and encouragement, if a country is to play a worthy part in the world's activities. Certain it is that to-day Government Departments in Great Britain directly concerned with the war effort—especially new offices without established information centres of their own—are increasingly relying on them for much information needed for the successful prosecution of their work. The Science Library at South Kensington, as one of the largest of these libraries, with its wealth of periodical literature and its well-known bibliographical service, is one of those most able to assist the State and firms working for the Government. Its loan department, which deals with many thousands of volumes a year, is a great asset to Great Britain at any time but never more so than at present, and its possession of much scientific literature from the smaller countries of Europe must be a source of the greatest value to the Allied Governments in London, cut off, for the moment, from their own resources. It cannot be divulged what particular services libraries like the Science Library have rendered to Great Britain and its Allies during the War, but these may well be found to be not