

and facsimile copies of twenty-two of the letters (which to the inexperienced eye are scarcely distinguishable from the originals), was presented by Sir George on May 14 to the Institution of Electrical Engineers. In addition, a thousand copies of a general edition of the letters have been printed and will be presented to universities, libraries and engineering societies. The letters are very mixed in content and personality of author, but they serve a useful purpose in revealing the wide interests of Siemens and in reflecting the manners of the times in which he lived. The letters written by men of science form a minority, but they are a notable array; his correspondents included Airy, Bessemer, Crookes, Darwin, Dawson, Faraday, Fowler, Hooker, Helmholtz, Huxley, Kelvin, Lockyer, Maxwell, Rankine, Rayleigh, Roscoe, Tyndall, Wheatstone and Whitworth. That by Sir Norman Lockyer, the astronomer and founder-editor of *Nature*, deals with a previous statement made by him that there is no oxygen to be detected spectroscopically in the sun's chromosphere. The letters range in date from one of a number by Faraday in 1862 to one by Lady Kelvin in 1902 deploring the death of Queen Victoria and looking forward, with very mixed feelings, to the Coronation of Edward VII.

Committee on the Effects of Synthetic Detergents

THE Minister of Housing and Local Government, Mr. Harold Macmillan, has stated that, after consulting the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Health, he has appointed a committee with the following terms of reference: "to examine and report on the effects of the increasing use of synthetic detergents and to make any recommendations that seem desirable with particular reference to the functioning of the public health services". The committee is constituted as follows: Sir Harry Jephcott, chairman and managing director of Glaxo Laboratories, Ltd. (chairman); Dr. N. R. Beattie, principal medical officer, Ministry of Health; C. E. Boast, borough engineer and surveyor, County Borough of Croydon; Prof. J. C. Cruickshank, professor of bacteriology as applied to hygiene, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; G. H. W. Cullinan, general manager, Shell Chemicals, Ltd.; Lt.-Col. E. F. W. Mackenzie, director of water examination, Metropolitan Water Board; G. MacRobbie, assistant secretary, Department of Health for Scotland; F. D. Morrell, director, Unilever, Ltd., London; Dr. J. R. Nicholls, deputy government chemist; F. T. K. Pentelow, chief inspector of salmon and freshwater fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; Dr. B. A. Southgate, director, Water Pollution Research Laboratory, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research; H. Symon, under-secretary, Ministry of Housing and Local Government; W. L. Thomas, chief chemist and technical director, Woolembers, Ltd., Bradford; C. B. Townend, chief engineer, main drainage, Middlesex County Council; R. Craig Wood, managing director, Thomas Hedley and Co., Ltd., Newcastle upon Tyne. *Technical Officers*: Dr. E. A. B. Birse, chief inspector of alkali works and rivers pollution, Department of Health for Scotland; Lt.-Col. F. G. Hill, adviser on sewerage and sewage disposal, Ministry of Housing and Local Government; Dr. A. Key, senior chemical inspector, Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The secretary to the committee is Mr. A. R. Isserlis, Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

Geological Society of Australia

THE recently constituted Geological Society of Australia grew from groups of geologists who have met more or less informally during the past few years at various centres in the Commonwealth. The Society has been organized on a Federal basis with State divisions, local branches at appropriate centres, and a Federal Council governing the whole. While membership is being established in the several States (including the Federal Territories), the Society is functioning under a Provisional Council with Prof. E. S. Hills as chairman. Formal elections are to be held in June. The first publication of the Society, No. 1 of the *News Bulletin*, has appeared (March 1953) and plans for the issue of a *Journal* are well advanced. No papers will appear in the *News Bulletin*, the function of which is intended to be the welding of closer personal bonds between Australian geologists. The first issue is of lively interest and contains many items of personal news besides summaries of work in progress. The New South Wales Division, for example, has reports from the University of Sydney, New England University College, the Geological Survey, a number of museums and public authorities, and various mining companies in the Broken Hill district.

Noteworthy news items include the following. A late Pre-Cambrian tillite has been discovered in the north of Western Australia. The heat-flow in Tasmania is being measured by the Geophysics Department of the National University. Prof. S. W. Carey is spending a sabbatical year developing his views on continental drift. Prof. E. S. Hills is completing a study of Upper Devonian cauldron subsidences in Victoria including one fifteen miles across. Some of the members of Prof. C. E. Marshall's staff at Sydney are engaged in investigating the geology of the Solomon Islands and parts of Papua; a recent graduate has been "well-sitting" (*sic*) with an oil company; and a teaching fellow "has resigned to enter the church". Altogether the *Bulletin* should add considerably to the gaiety of Australian—and not only Australian—geologists. But it closes on a more sombre note with an obituary notice of the late Prof. E. W. Skeats, who died in January at the age of seventy-eight. Judging by the response of Australian geologists to the demands and privileges of their new Society, success would seem to be well assured. The first issue of the forthcoming *Journal* will be eagerly awaited.

The Spirit of Applied Mathematics

UNDER the title of "The Spirit of Applied Mathematics", Prof. C. A. Coulson gave his inaugural lecture on October 28, 1952, as Rouse Ball professor of applied mathematics in the University of Oxford, and the text of the lecture has now been published (pp. 24. Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1953. 2s. 6d. net). After tributes to the founder of the chair, to his own predecessor, Prof. E. A. Milne, and to the mathematician—physicist—biologist, D. E. Lea, Prof. Coulson said that applied mathematics is, more frequently than not, misunderstood. Even its name is against it, as it suggests that it is a mental rag-bag in which one can rummage to find a bit of unused mathematics applicable to the latest discovery in experimental physics. But really the glory of applied mathematics, he continued, is not in such applications but in the creation of concepts, an intellectual adventure which combines creative imagination and