

Work of Sir Edmund Whittaker

THE *Proceedings of the Edinburgh Mathematical Society* of June 1958 is a worthy memorial to the late Sir Edmund Whittaker. An obituary notice by D. Martin is followed by papers on various aspects of Whittaker's work: harmonic functions (G. Temple); automorphic functions (R. A. Rankin); algebra and numerical analysis (A. C. Aitken); relativity (J. L. Synge); physics and philosophy (J. McConnell). Few mathematicians of our time have matched Whittaker's clear vision and deep knowledge of the whole field of modern mathematics. To young men he was always an inspiration, and to ensure that this inspiration shall not be entirely lost, his family has founded a Whittaker Memorial Prize for the encouragement of young mathematicians in Scotland; details are given in this number of the *Proceedings*.

The National Museums, Ceylon

THE annual reports of the National Museums in Ceylon for 1956 and 1957 (pp. 20+5 plates. 70 cents. Pp. 23+2 plates. 70 cents. Colombo: Government Publications Bureau, 1957 and 1958) record steady but not spectacular progress in all departments. The most outstanding discovery yet made in Ceylon was that of a Stone Age kitchen-midden in the Balangoda District containing a number of ceremonial burials in a flexed position. The skull is being reconstructed at the American Museum of Natural History and it is hoped that a carbon-14 test will be carried out in Britain. The Museum Week sponsored by Unesco in October 1956 was duly observed and important and instructive talks were given on Radio Ceylon.

Museum of Applied Science at Victoria

The annual report of the Museum of Applied Science of Victoria for the year ended June 30, 1957 (pp. 30. Melbourne: Museum of Applied Science of Victoria, 1958), is up to date, as it opens with a photographic illustration of a model of a space satellite now included in the museum collections. Another fascinating exhibit is a model of an oxygen atom with its twenty-four particles in rapid motion. Special exhibits were also displayed for the benefit of visitors to the Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956. A series of large portraits of eight famous scientists, ranging from Galileo to Einstein, attracted much attention. The Museum has been fortunate in achieving two of its objectives of many years—the provision of a convenient store of adequate size and a hoist for moving massive objects to and from the main floor.

Technical Information Systems

THE Office of Scientific Information of the National Science Foundation has issued under the title "Non-Conventional Technical Information Systems in Current Use" (pp. v+43. Washington, D.C., 1958) a report briefly describing twenty-five representative systems of new design, covering the principles of operation of each system, the equipment and manpower required, the size of the group served and of the file and its rate of growth, with bibliographical references to any published information on the system. The report is purely factual and includes no comment or criticism of the systems described.

Among these are the mechanized searching system for patents on steroid compounds used at the United States Patent Office, the hand-sorted punched-card file for geochemistry maintained at the United States Geological Survey, the mechanized indexing system for literature in pathology and biochemistry, using the IBM 101 statistical machine at the Documentation Centre of the Schering Corporation, and the 'peek-a-boo' system of co-ordinate indexing used, for chemical compounds tested, by the U.S. National Institutes of Health cancer chemotherapy programme.

Egyptian Scientific Institutions

To assist men of science who are interested in the development of science in Egypt, the Middle East Science Co-operation Office of Unesco has published a survey of all the scientific institutions in Egypt (pp. 149. Cairo: Unesco Science Co-operation Office, 1957). The institutions listed are concerned with teaching and research not only in the fields of pure science but also in engineering, agricultural and medical sciences. With the exception of various scientific societies, all these institutions are government bodies. The survey explains how scientific institutions are controlled by the Ministry of Education and also gives a clear account of the national educational system. Among the institutions described are the universities, the Science Council, the National Research Centre, Desert Institute, Atomic Energy Commission, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry (Geological and Mineral Research Department, Mines and Quarries Department), Ministry of Commerce (Chemical Department), Ministry of Public Works (Nile Control Department), Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of War, the Egyptian Sciences Association, l'Institut d'Egypte, and the Egyptian Academy of Science. Names of leading members of the staffs of these organizations are included.

University Theses

THE Committee of the University and Research Section of the Library Association set up in 1952 a small sub-committee to investigate ways and means of publishing detailed information about the contents of theses accepted in British universities and increasing their availability. A report by this sub-committee, published in the *Library Association Record* (60, 13; 1958), expresses the opinion that the arrangements with regard to theses are generally too haphazard to be entirely satisfactory and that it should be possible for the universities to adopt a uniform plan to render such information more comprehensive and regularly available. The sub-committee was aware of the "Index to Theses accepted for Higher Degrees", published annually by Aslib since 1950-51, and noted a scheme operated by University Microfilms in the United States in which some eighty universities and associated institutions participate, but inquiries as to the feasibility of a similar scheme in the United Kingdom met with a disappointing response. The report summarizes the difficulties which must be overcome in regard to accessibility or secrecy, copyright, etc. It stresses the importance both of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries persuading British universities to accept a desirable standard of availability and also of the work of the Department of Scientific and Industrial