

tion of the production and motion of dislocations in thin films. It is hoped to make measurements of the dislocation velocity and the strength of the films and to carry out detailed diffraction studies of highly strained perfect whisker crystals outside the Hooke's law region.

#### RARE BOOKS

### Still Room for the Collector

THE days have, of course, gone forever when a first edition of Newton's *Principia*, which by the standards of antiquarian booksellers is not a particularly rare book, could be bought for less than £50. In the past twenty years the interest in and demand for classic scientific books have increased considerably and it scarcely needs saying that the interest and the money to buy are greatest in the United States. Today you cannot expect much change from £3,000 for the *Principia*, and Hooke's *Micrographia* comes in much the same category. A copy usually comes up for sale every two or three years, as one did last week at Sotheby's. Ten or fifteen years ago it might have fetched £120—last week the copy was knocked down at £750. But is that very much to pay for a book of such importance to the history of science? The expert on scientific books at Sotheby's does not think so. He believes that, compared with the first editions of the great and not so great books in other fields, historic scientific books are still very good value for money.

A first edition of something like Richardson's *Pamela* costs much the same as Newton's *Principia*. Naturally scarcity value as much as scientific importance dictates the price of a book. At last week's sale of part of the library of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, for example, Guillemeau's *The Frenche Chirurgerye or all the Manuelle Operations of Chirurgerye* fetched £950. This book, translated from the Dutch, printed in 1597 and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I, is now a curiosity. A third edition of Gilbert's *de Magnete* printed in 1633 was sold for £200, and Jenner's *An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variole Vaccinae* went for £480.

Of course, a few books are both extremely rare and extremely important to the history of science. First editions of books by Copernicus or Kepler would probably sell for £10,000 and more, and Harvey's *Circulation of the Blood* is virtually unobtainable. Only about fifty copies were printed, abroad and on poor paper which has contributed to the scarcity. The reprint houses which, judging from their numbers, seem to be doing brisk business with reprints of classic works of literature, seem to have overlooked the possibilities of producing facsimiles of these rarest of scientific books.

But according to Sotheby's expert, a science specialist who knows his field well can still collect an interesting library which, in the long run, will turn out to be a good investment. He would have to be prepared to spend about £1,000 a year for ten or fifteen years, which admittedly reduces the field, but it is less capital than would be needed to collect works of literature. The best thing to do is to concentrate on books published in the early nineteenth century and forget the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which are rich men's pickings. There are, of course, a few very scarce

and expensive nineteenth century scientific books—Brown's broadside on Brownian motion and Sir Charles Bell's *New Anatomy of the Brain*, only a hundred copies of which were printed in 1811, are examples—but apart from such well known rarities bibliographers have tended to ignore the science books of the period; anyone who knows the history of science in the nineteenth century ought to be able to compete easily with the dealers who are usually much more familiar with literature than science. Equally important, the books of the nineteenth century scientists have not yet become fashionable as collectors' pieces.

#### BRITISH ASSOCIATION

### Signing on for Exeter

WITH the final programme just published, the British Association for the Advancement of Science is hoping that about two thousand members will attend the annual meeting in Exeter in September. At the end of last week 1,200 people had signified their intention of attending, including 102 members of the newly formed junior branch, the British Association Young Scientists (BAYS). This year, of course, all except the youngest participants—the twelve to fifteen year olds—will be paying to attend the meeting. As the president, Sir Peter Medawar, pointed out last week, at £7 for full members, £3 10s for students and £1 15s for BAYS, this is very good value for a week's opportunity to catch up with the latest scientific developments.

In view of the sudden large increase in the cost of attending the annual meeting—previously included in the membership subscription which is now a separate charge—1,200 enrolments is thought to compare adequately with the 1,600 who had enrolled for the Dundee meeting this time last year. The meeting at Exeter is likely to cost about £14,000 and so, if the local fund raised by generous industry and commerce in Exeter and the West Country reaches the hoped for £8,000, £6,000 is needed from the annual meeting fees.

The intention of the new membership structure and charges is to encourage many more people to join the association, but not necessarily to attend the meeting every year. Young people seem to be responding with enthusiasm; BAYS branches are apparently springing up so rapidly that headquarters has difficulty keeping track of them. There are now about 3,000 of these young scientists throughout the country, and their representatives will be holding their first national conference at the Exeter meeting.

In line with the purpose of the annual meeting to inform non-scientists in terms they can understand, as well as to enable specialists to meet and discuss their work in the various sections, this year there will be several events of very general interest. At the two plenary symposia, such important people as the managing director of NRDC and the director of the National Society for Clean Air will bring their minds to bear on the problems of how to exploit Britain's inventive talents in industry, and how to manage the natural environment without polluting or destroying it. There will also be five public lectures to which non-members will be welcome. It is hoped that local non-scientists will be attracted to come to listen to such speakers as Dr Anthony Hewish on pulsars and Dr A. C. Allison on immunity against tumours.