

Those present included representatives from New York City, from the Cornell, Lehigh and Johns Hopkins Universities, from the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, the Franklin Institute, etc. Professor J. W. Richards, vice-president of the American Chemical Society, acted as chairman, and Carl Hering, past president of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, as secretary. All those present were heartily in favor; the only doubt expressed was whether a sufficient number of members could be obtained to make such a society a success. A committee was appointed, with Dr. Chas. A. Doremus, of the College of the City of New York, as chairman, to canvass for members; and if seventy-five or over pledge themselves to join, the society will be formed. In that case, certain committees which were appointed will arrange for holding a formal meeting at which the society will be founded and papers read and discussed. Anyone desiring to become a member is asked to communicate with Dr. Doremus at the above address.

It was furthermore decided to be the expression of those present that the name of the organization should be the American Electro-chemical Society; that the dues should not exceed \$5.00 per year, and that at first only a few meetings of a few days each should be held per year, and that they be held in different cities, as the society is to be a national one.

The fact that papers on the subject of electro-chemistry are now scattered over a half dozen or more existing national societies was thought to be in itself a very good reason for bringing them all together into one, where they could then be properly discussed, which is not now the case. Attention was also called to the fact that the annual electro-chemical products of this country already amount to nearly \$100,000,000, which is far greater than in all the other countries combined. Germany, which comes next with \$14,000,000, has a flourishing electro-chemical society with about 40 members in the United States.

#### THE UNITED STATES NAVAL OBSERVATORY.

THE board of visitors of the U. S. Naval Observatory, consisting of Professors C. A. Young,

C. F. Chandler, Asaph Hall, Jr., E. C. Pickering and Ormond Stone and President W. R. Harper, have recently held a meeting and submitted a report to Secretary Long. Extracts from the report published in the *Washington Evening Star*, are as follows:

"It is recommended that no astronomical director be appointed at present, as a dual headship has been found to work unsatisfactorily, and under the existing law the appointment of an astronomer as sole director of the observatory—which the board considers the proper solution of the question—is impracticable. Vacancies should not be filled among assistant astronomers nor among professors of mathematics in the navy without examination for each vacancy occurring. No distinction should be made between employees of the observatory and other applicants. The responsibilities of the positions of assistant astronomer and professor of mathematics are distinctly different from those of computer, although much of the required experience may properly be gained in connection with the latter position and be credited in the examinations for the higher positions. As far as is consistent with the routine needs of the institution, the duties of the computers should be so arranged as to encourage them to prepare for advancement within the observatory itself. In no case should appointments be made to the observatory merely by transfer from other bureaus or offices in the service, nor should appointments ever be made even temporarily without competitive examination."

Applying these principles to practice the board declines to name a person to fill the vacant office of assistant astronomer at the observatory and instead recommends that the appointment be made after a civil service examination under the auspices of the commission.

Coming to the more important subject of the actual head of the observatory, which involves the issue between the scientists and the line officers, the board says:

"As every other prominent observatory is under the direction of an astronomer, we wish to record our deliberate and unanimous judgment that the laws limiting the superintend-

ency to a line officer of the navy should be changed so as to provide that the official head of the observatory—perhaps styled simply the director—should be an eminent astronomer appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, holding this place by a tenure at least as permanent as that of the superintendent of the coast survey, or the head of the geological survey, and not merely by a detail of two or three years' duration. Only in this way can there be a continuous and effective policy of administration which will insure astronomical work of a high order. In rank, salary, privileges and prestige he should be superior to any other official on the ground.

"The limitation in the selection of assistants should also be removed, and the assistant once appointed should be secure against detachment or removal except by the action, for cause, of the director. The institution should be related to the Navy Department, if continued under its control, in some such way as the Royal Observatory at Greenwich is related to the British admiralty. It should be put under the control of the secretary directly, and not through a bureau as at present."

In conclusion the Board finds objection to the manner in which appropriations have been made in support of the observatory, saying that it is not easy to determine what portion of the expenditures pertains properly to astronomical work, what portion to the naval work, and what portion to the improvement and care of the grounds as a part. The cost of maintenance for the last fiscal year was \$108,428, of which amount \$21,258 was expended in salaries.

#### SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

DR. J. WILLARD GIBBS, of Yale University, has been awarded the Copley Medal of the Royal Society for his contributions to mathematical physics.

HENRY M. HOWE, professor of metallurgy at Columbia University, has been elected an honorary member of the Russian Technical Society at St. Petersburg.

DR. E. A. DE SCHWEINITZ, dean of the Columbian University Medical School and direct-

or of the Biochemic Laboratory, U. S. Department of Agriculture, has recently been elected a corresponding member of the Epidemiological Society of London, and also of the 'Society for Combating Tuberculosis,' of Berlin.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM F. WILLOUGHBY, recently expert in the U. S. Department of Labor and now of Harvard University, has been appointed treasurer of Porto Rico.

PROFESSOR LUIGI PALAZZO has been appointed director of the Central Meteorological and Geodetic Institute at Rome.

DR. VON WETTSTEIN, of the University of Vienna, who was sent by the government to study the flora of Brazil, has returned.

It is stated by the Berlin correspondent of the *Times* that Professor Paul Ehrlich, of Frankfurt-on-the-Main, has been enabled to devote himself to a special study of the disease of cancer in consequence of a bequest of the interest for three years of a sum of 500,000 Marks dedicated to this purpose by a Frankfurt banker, the late Herr Theodor Stern. Other sums contributed by private individuals will bring up the amount to be devoted to this special investigation of cancer by Dr. Ehrlich to 40,000 Marks, or \$10,000 a year. In Berlin there exists a special committee for the investigation of cancer, which studies pathological accounts of cases and collects statistics and medical literature on this subject. Professor von Leyden is at the head of the committee, and Professor von Kirchner, of the medical department of the Ministry of Public Instruction, is one of its members.

THE Craig Colony Prize of \$200 has been awarded to Professor Carlo Ceni, of Pavia, Italy, for an essay, entitled 'Serotherapy in Epilepsy.'

At the scientific meeting of the Zoological Society of London, on November 19, papers were read by Professor Ray Lankester, on '*Okapia*, a New Genus of Giraffidæ from Central Africa,' and by Mr. Oldfield Thomas 'On the Giraffe discovered by Sir Harry Johnston near Mount Elgon, Central Africa.'

THE work of putting in place at Wood's Holl a boulder to serve as a memorial to the late Professor Spencer F. Baird is now completed.