

A NEW NATIONAL MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY

EACH of the five leading mathematical countries of the world—Germany, France, Italy, England and America—has a flourishing national mathematical society. In England and in Italy these societies still bear local names, while in America the name was changed from New York to American several years after the organization of the society.

Although the oldest of these societies, the London Mathematical Society, was organized a little less than half a century ago, they have developed at a marvelous rate during the last few decades and they play a prominent rôle in the present mathematical activity. At least two of them, the German and the Italian, are rapidly assuming an international character. In fact, considerably more than a hundred Americans are now members of the Italian society, while the German society has about eighty such members.

A Spanish Mathematical Society was organized at the University of Madrid during a session held on the fifth day of last April. Whether this new national society will assume a prominent place among those named above, remains to be seen. It has comprehensive plans with a view to uniting the Spanish mathematicians, and its development will be watched with unusual interest by Americans, since the Spanish language is used so extensively on our continent.

During the month following its organization the Spanish Mathematical Society began the publication of a monthly periodical bearing the name *Revista de la Sociedad Matemática Española*. Judging from the title page, it is to be very comprehensive, including articles on analysis, geometry, mechanics, astronomy, mathematical physics, geodesy, history, pedagogy, etc. The material appears under seven sectional headings bearing the following names: biography, doctrine, bibliography, news, vocabulary, intermedium, problems.

The society aims to publish translations of important foreign publications and to furnish these to its members at cost or even at a lower

price. It also undertakes to look up references for its members and to furnish them with translations of journal articles at cost. The administrative office of the society is at 51 San Bernardo, Madrid, Spain, and the comprehensive plans of organization include a division of its members into nine different classes.

The first two numbers of the *Revista* have appeared and are very creditable in view of the general aims of the society. They contain 40 and 36 pages, respectively. The articles are brief and elementary, and comparatively few references are given. One could scarcely expect much in the way of profound scholarship in the early numbers of such a journal, as its main function is to awaken a mathematical interest and to reach many whom it can lead to higher planes and unite into a strong force.

Not all scientific men realize the urgent demands for wise labors in mathematical fields. In a recent number of the *Archiv der Mathematik und Physik*, volume 18, page 175, Professor Study makes the following observations: "As far as our geometrical production has any claims on earnest appreciation it is preponderantly careless work (Raubban). The success of Steiner and others with more or less natural talents seems to have aided to create a method, which is convenient, for both the author and the reviewer, of arriving at a verdict; according to this method only the *main facts* are considered in geometry, while precision is not regarded as a main fact." Professor Study goes on to point out that a great part of advanced geometry is now in the state of an undigested mass, and that it will require much additional work before all the matter which appears in Bianchi's classic "*Lezioni di Geometria Differenziale*" can be presented in a satisfactory manner.

While a considerable part of mathematics demands a re-working from the standpoint of precision, the numerous new fields that have been opened call continually for workers who are properly equipped. The increasing number of mathematical investigators calls for increasing supervision and direction, and

these can be most effectively furnished by mathematical societies. The new Spanish society has an unusually large amount of virgin soil, and the very rapid recent mathematical advances of Italy may inspire the hope that "nascitur non fit" may be applicable to this new society, and that it may have a healthy and rapid growth.

G. A. MILLER

*AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN GREAT BRITAIN*¹

THE British Board of Agriculture and Fisheries has been in communication with the Development Commissioners with a view to the formulation of a scheme for the promotion of agricultural research and local investigations in England and Wales, and the treasury, on the recommendation of the commissioners, has sanctioned the allocation of funds to be distributed by the board in accordance with the general principles set out below. The total maximum sum which will be expended when the scheme is in full operation will be about £50,000 per annum.

The scheme provides for: (1) A system of agricultural research which will secure for each group of the problems affecting rural industry a share of attention roughly proportional to its economic importance. (2) The concentration of the scientific work on each group at one institution or at institutions working in combination. (3) Grants for special investigations for which provision may not otherwise be made. (4) The grant of scholarships with a view to the increase of the number of men fully qualified to undertake agricultural research. (5) The carrying out of investigations into problems of local importance, especially those involving the application of modern research to local practise, and the provision of scientific advice for farmers on important technical questions.

In making arrangements for the separate investigation, as far as possible, of each group of allied subjects the commissioners and the board have been impressed with the importance of securing continuity in work which is

¹ From the London *Times*.

necessarily of considerable duration, and at the same time of providing staffs of specialists and experts who will be permanently engaged on work arising from the investigation of the same group of problems. By this means concentration and economy of effort will be better secured than it would be if a number of institutions were dealing at the same time with the same group of problems.

It is neither desirable nor possible to prevent all overlapping or duplication of work, but it is obviously necessary to proceed on a plan by which research work subsidized from public funds will not be unnecessarily duplicated. It is also desirable to arrange that each problem shall be undertaken by the institution best fitted to deal with it, and usually by the institution which has specially devoted its attention to problems of an allied nature. It is also important to avoid the giving of undue attention to one part of the field of agricultural research, to the exclusion of other parts which are of equal scientific and economic importance.

With these considerations in view, it has been arranged that grants should be made for research in the following groups of subjects: (1) plant physiology; (2) plant pathology and mycology; (3) plant breeding; (4) fruit growing, including the practical treatment of plant diseases; (5) plant nutrition and soil problems; (6) animal nutrition; (7) animal breeding; (8) animal pathology; (9) dairying; (10) agricultural zoology; (11) economics of agriculture.

THE AMERICAN MINING CONGRESS

THE fourteenth annual session of the American Mining Congress will be held at the Hotel La Salle, Chicago, Ill., October 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28. The original intention was to have the convention September 26 to 29. President Taft, however, found it would be impossible for him to attend and there arose the possibility that neither Secretary Fisher nor Director Holmes, of the Bureau of Mines, would reach Chicago by that date. The Alaska branch of the congress asked for a