

the perfecting of gas masks. He has been appointed by the National Research Council member of a committee of four, known as the sub-committee on colloids.

PROFESSOR H. BURGER, of Amsterdam, has been elected corresponding member of the laryngological section of the Royal Society of Medicine at London.

MR. W. BOYD CAMPBELL, assistant superintendent at the forest products laboratory, McGill University, Montreal, is now in charge of the chemical engineering work of the Process Engineers Limited Montreal.

THE fourth lecture of Harvey Society will be given by Dr. Frederic S. Lee on "Industrial Fatigue" at the New York Academy of Medicine on Saturday evening, March 1.

PROFESSOR ROBERT F. GRIGGS, director of the National Geographical Society Katmai Expeditions, delivered an address on "Katmai and ten Thousand Smokes" before the Washington Academy of Sciences on February 18.

DR. ALEŠ HRDLICKA, curator of the division of physical anthropology, United States National Museum, will give four lectures on "The Origin and Antiquity of the American Indian" at the Wagner Free Institute of Science. The lectures, which are in the Richard B. Westbrook foundation, will be given on March 8, 15, 22 and 29.

SIR R. H. INGLIS PALGRAVE, distinguished for his work on economics and statistics died on January 25 at the age of ninety-one years.

DR. LOUIS-ÉDOUARD BUREAU, formerly professor of botany at the Paris Museum of Natural History has died at the age of eighty-eight years.

DR. EUGENE PENARD, of Geneva, Switzerland, has nearly completed his great work on the Infusaria, on which he has been working for five years. He has material for two volumes of 850 pages each, but it will be necessary, on account of the cost of the publication, to condense it to a single volume of 650 pages. Dr. Penard is much occupied at the present time with his duties as a member of the commission to administer relief to

refugee Russians in Switzerland, under the American Red Cross.

#### UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NEWS

A GROUP of alumni, headed by George P. Adamson, have completed the endowment of the Edward Hart fellowship at Lafayette College. The endowment is in the sum of \$10,000, yielding \$500 per annum, and is open to students of chemistry holding the bachelor's degree desiring to do research work in problems connected with viscous and plastic flow. The endowment was made in honor of Professor Edward Hart, who has completed forty years as professor of chemistry at Lafayette.

THE Women's College in Brown University received a gift of \$50,000 to be used for a new dormitory.

DR. BENJAMIN IDE WHEELER has presented his resignation as president of the University of California.

PROFESSOR D. W. WORKING, of the Office of Farm Management of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, has accepted the positions of dean of the Arizona College of Agriculture and director of the Agricultural Experiment Station.

IN the absence on leave in Europe of Director H. Hayward, Professor A. E. Grantham, agronomist, has been appointed acting director of the Delaware College Agricultural Experiment Station beginning February 1. E. A. Hodson, of Cornell University, has been appointed assistant professor of agronomy.

DR. W. E. MILNE has been appointed professor of mathematics at the University of Oregon, to succeed Dr. R. M. Winger.

#### DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

##### A STANDARD SCIENTIFIC ALPHABET

STANDARDIZING is one of the unending labors of science. By accurate standards scientists are able to test and prove, to plan intelligently, and to indicate precisely. Scientists substituted a simple and definite metric system for a great number of irregular and unrelated

systems of measurement of dimension, capacity, weight, etc. They substituted the exact centigrade thermometer with 100 degrees between freezing and boiling of water, for the system without absolute bases. They gave America and other countries an exact decimal system of moneys. They devised a decimal system for classification, for books, correspondence, etc.

But in the field of sound-notation or sound-representation, nothing comparable with the foregoing contributions to the world's progress and civilization has been done. For untold ages, the general capacity of the human vocal organs to make sounds has been the same. Each has the same provision of lips, teeth, tongue, palate, and the same provision as to lungs, larynx, windpipe, pharynx and nasal passages. Every normal person can, if trained, at least when young, make exactly the same vocal sounds as can any other normal person.

Ages ago men began to use these vocal sounds to express ideas; spoken languages resulted. Ages later "Cadmus, the Phenicians, or whoever it was," Egyptians, or others, struck upon the thought that a certain mark might stand for a certain sound. An alphabet was devised. Others developed, either offshoots of the first, or independently. To-day we have many alphabets. They were made originally for a particular language or dialect, and were limited to the sounds of that tongue; or they were borrowed from another people and but imperfectly suited the sounds of the borrowing language. None was made for all mankind; none was devised and none is adapted for the whole world. To-day in the new era after the war, the world needs an alphabet, a universal alphabet, a world-alphabet, a standard set of signs, characters or letters, full and complete, so that every sound used by any collection of human beings to indicate (alone or with other sounds) an idea, or to form a word of spoken language or dialect, shall be represented by one letter and only one letter; and so that every such letter shall stand for one and for only one sound.

The Roman alphabet which we and much of western and southern Europe uses, the Gothic,

used (not to the exclusion of, but rather concurrently with Roman) by Germans and some Scandinavians, the Greek of Greece, etc., the Cyrillic of Russia and other peoples, the Gaelic, the Anglo-Saxon futhorc, the many cursive characters of Arabic, the Indian alphabets, the ideographs of the Orient, the special alphabets devised for aboriginal tribes of America, Africa and elsewhere—none meets the requirements set out above for a universal, world-alphabet. Such standard alphabet must be a scientific creation, or adaptation and adoption from present alphabets.

In the reorganization of the world at this time, a world conference of scholars and students, versed in many lines of art and science, should be held to devise and present a world-alphabet for consideration and adoption.

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#### NONSILVERABLE CONTAINERS FOR SILVER-ING MIRRORS

UNDER this title<sup>1</sup> the writer has recently called attention to the observation that certain samples of "granite ware" enamelled iron pans did not seem to attract silver, in the ordinary process of silvering glass mirrors. However, it was not intended to convey the idea that one would expect this to hold true as a general rule.

Just why these pans did not take on a coat of silver while certain white enamelled pans did receive a thick coat of silver, is not understood—as is true of a great many other phenomena observed in attempting to deposit silver chemically upon glass. For example, it has been found easier to silver optical (white crown) glass than a certain mirror made of ordinary plate glass. One concave mirror, which is made of ordinary glass, always shows a spot where the deposit of silver is different from the rest of the surface, even after making a special effort in polishing and cleaning the glass surface. Again, making a container by tying a rim of clean writing paper around the edge of a glass disk, good mirrors were pro-

<sup>1</sup> SCIENCE, 48, p. 345, 1918.