

smile, we may at least believe that they looked forward to the things they could not accomplish but which you shall accomplish.

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE JAMES WATT CENTENARY COMMEMORATION AT BIRMINGHAM¹

THE arrangements for the James Watt centenary commemoration are now practically complete, the general scheme being set forth in a pamphlet issued by the Centenary Committee. The form which the memorial is to take is threefold: (1) To endow a professorship of engineering, to be known as the James Watt chair, at the University of Birmingham, for the promotion of research in the fundamental principles underlying the production of power, and the study of the conservation of the natural sources of energy; (2) to erect a James Watt memorial building to serve as a museum for collecting together examples of the work of James Watt and his contemporaries, Boulton and Murdock, as a meeting place and library for scientific and technical societies, and as a center from which engineers could cooperate in spreading scientific knowledge; and (3) to publish a memorial volume.

The success of the memorial will depend upon the response to the appeal for funds, and we are glad to note that assurances of support have come not only from all parts of the British Isles, but also from France and America. As indicated in our issue of May 15, we attach special importance to the foundation of the James Watt chair of engineering, and we can imagine no better memorial to the great engineer than the creation of a school of research so endowed as to attract both a professor of exceptional ability and also the most brilliant students, of whatever class. Such a scheme would require an endowment on a scale altogether greater than that which is usually associated with chairs in universities, but it should be possible to raise the necessary money—especially with the sympathetic help of America, which of recent years has shown not only a ready appreciation of the value of scientific research, but also a

generosity in its endowment which has been more admired than imitated in this country. It must always be remembered that the vital factor in research is the *man*, and every possible inducement should be offered to secure the best men, both as directors and students.

The commemoration ceremonies are to extend over the three days, September 16–18, and the official program includes a garden-party at Watt's house (where his workshop can be seen in the state in which he left it in 1819), and visits to Soho Foundry and two of his engines (one of which, the first pumping engine built for sale by Boulton and Watt in 1776, will be seen at work). A degree congregation is to be held by the university at which honorary degrees will be conferred on distinguished engineers and men of science.

The committee has issued a short pamphlet (by Professor F. W. Burstall) in which an appreciation is given of the salient facts in the life of Watt, and of his epoch-making association with his colleagues Boulton and Murdock.

MEETING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PATHOMETRY OF THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

THE Section on Vital Statistics of the American Public Health Association at the Annual Meeting in Chicago in December, 1918, reorganized the Special Committee on Statistical Study of the Influenza Epidemic with three subcommittees on Registration and Tabulation Practice of the Federal Departments (Subcommittee A), the State Departments and Commissions (Subcommittee B) Municipal Boards of Health and of other local Public Health Agencies (Subcommittee C) and a fourth subcommittee (D) on Pathometry or Mathematical Analysis and Interpretation of the Epidemic.

Subcommittee A, B, C have met at various times and will have data ready for the consideration of subcommittee D at a meeting called for 9:30 A.M., September 19, at Columbia University. Sessions will follow in the afternoon and on Saturday the twentieth.

The discussions at the preliminary meetings

¹ From *Nature*.

of the emergency special committee held in Philadelphia last November and in Chicago last December, brought out a rather confusing lack of agreement as to the effects of preventive measures, and of modes of treatment, upon the form of the epidemic wave, and as to the kinds and character of statistical data available. The work and recommendations of the other three registration and tabulation sub-committee will result in bringing before the coming meeting data that are more uniform, and so better adapted to comparative study towards discovering the quantitative relationships which hold in this epidemic and which it holds in common with other epidemics.

Towards having epidemiology take another step or two away from qualitative methods and towards quantitative research, an earnest invitation is hereby extended to members of the medical profession, to physical chemists and biochemists, to bacteriologists, to those interested in mathematical statistics and climatology, and others to attend the meetings on September 19 and 20, at Columbia University, and other meetings to be announced, and to participate freely in the deliberations of the committee. Meanwhile the chairman invites correspondence addressed to Pomona, N. Y.

Professor Svante Arrhenius pointed out in his Tyndall lectures that "physical chemistry allows us to follow quantitatively the influence of temperature and of foreign substances upon these interesting organic products, which are of the greatest importance in industry, in the physiological processes of daily life, and in diseases and their therapy." In the *Proceedings* of the Royal Society of Medicine, May, 1918, Vol. XI., No. 7, pages 85-132, John Brownlee, M.D., director of statistics, medical research committee, develops a theory in which "the organism producing the epidemic loses infecting power according to the law of a monomolecular reaction." Whether fitting curves to Pearsonian types or to those of immuno-chemistry shall lead to statistical light on influenza remains to be seen. These and other questions remain to be discussed by this committee

in a spirit of scientific open-minded search for the truth.

CHARLES C. GROVE,
Chairman

THE NEW ENGLAND FEDERATION OF NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETIES

THE fall meeting of the Federation will be held at Fall River on Friday and Saturday, September 26 and 27, with the Fall River Society of Natural History. The meeting will be in the parish house of the First Baptist Church on Pine Street just below Main. Take cars from the depot to Pine Street. For information in regard to hotels or other local matters write to Mr. Norman S. Easton, Fall River.

The Fall River Society will make a large exhibit illustrating the Natural History of the country around the city. Other exhibits are desired from societies and individuals. The exhibition will be open to the public all day Friday and Saturday. Packages may be sent to the parish house in care of the janitor.

Friday evening, September 26, there will be a public meeting at which there will lectures and addresses by several members. Saturday morning there will be excursions into the country for observation and collecting led by local members. Saturday at 2 P.M. there will be a meeting for business, for reports from the societies of the federation and or discussion of the exhibits and the mornings collections.

J. H. EMERTON,
Secretary

30 IPSWICH ST.,
BOSTON, MASS.

THE MARY CLARK THOMPSON MEDAL

THE president of the National Academy of Sciences, on authority of the Council of the Academy, has appointed the following committee to serve as the committee for the award of the Mary Clark Thompson Gold Medal, to be awarded annually for meritorious services in geology and paleontology: John M. Clarke, *Chairman*, Gano Dunn and Henry Fairfield Osborn.

The Academy accepted the gift in the following resolution: