

best boats in the Norwegian Whaling Fleet. It has a large and spacious deck, so that there will be plenty of room for dogs and sledges. Sir E. Shackleton has told an acquaintance in Christiania that he has given up the idea of exploring the South Polar regions, and in future will devote himself to the Arctic.

THE *Journal of Industrial Chemistry* reports that the International Chemical Conference last June decided to hold the next conference in Poland, at the invitation of Mr. Kowalski. At that time the situation in that country seemed fairly settled, but since then affairs have become disturbed, and the council of the union has decided that the next meeting can not be held in Warsaw. Dr. Parsons has extended an invitation from the American Chemical Society to hold the 1921 meeting in the United States, but European chemists are not in a position to make this move. Therefore the council has decided to hold the next meeting at Brussels, at the end of June. However, Mr. Paul Kestner, president of the Société de Chimie Industrielle, will attend the Canadian meeting of the British Chemical Society as the French delegate, and will return by way of the United States, where he will attend the meetings of the American chemical societies.

At the annual general meeting of the Association of Economic Biologists, as we learn from *Nature*, the following were elected officers and councillors for the year 1921: *President*: Sir David Prain. *Hon. Treasurer*: Dr. A. D. Imms, *Hon. Secretary (Gen. and Bot.)* Wm. B. Brierley. *Hon. Secretary (Zool.)*: Dr. S. A. Neave. *Hon. Editor (Bot.)*: Wm. B. Brierley. *Hon. Editor (Zool.)*: D. Ward Cutler. *Council*: Dr. W. Lawrence Balls, Professor V. H. Blackman, F. T. Brooks, A. B. Bruce, Dr. E. J. Butler, F. J. Chittenden, A. D. Cotton, J. C. F. Fryer, Professor J. B. Farmer, E. E. Green, Dr. G. A. K. Marshall and Dr. E. J. Russell. In view of the very great increase in the publishing costs of the *Annals of Applied Biology*, it was decided to establish a "Publication Fund," to which all interested in the progress

of biology and in its application to the welfare of man are invited to subscribe. Sir David Prain then delivered his presidential address on "Some Relationships of Economic Biology."

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NEWS

At the Founders' Day Celebration of the Johns Hopkins University, announcement was made that the trustees of the university would supplement the fund of \$215,000 raised by the Alumni Association for a memorial dormitory building at Homewood, so that the total cost of the building might be provided for.

IN response to the recent appeal of the University of Edinburgh for £500,000, the sum of £200,000 has now been subscribed.

GENERAL LEONARD WOOD has conferred with the trustees of the University of Pennsylvania in regard to accepting the provostship of the university, vacant by the retirement of Dr. Edgar F. Smith.

PROFESSOR FRANK AYDELOTTE, professor of English in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has been elected president of Swarthmore College, to succeed Dr. Joseph Swain.

DR. GUY POTTER BENTON, formerly president of the University of Vermont, has been appointed president of the University of the Philippines, with a salary and perquisites of 33,000 pesos (normally \$16,500). The place has been vacant two years.

DR. YANDELL HENDERSON, hitherto professor of physiology in the Yale Medical School, has been transferred to the Graduate School of Yale University under the title of professor of applied physiology.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE SECTION L OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

HAVING been secretary of Section A during a number of years when this section covered both of the subjects mathematics and astron-

omy the writer fails to see much force in the objections raised in the February 18 number of *SCIENCE* to the name "Historical and Philological Sciences" for Section L of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. From the fact that the special committee appointed by the President of the Association recommended that the words "and philological" be dropped it appears that the rest of this name would have been satisfactory to the committee. If this is the case the main objection to the suggested name seems to be due to a fear that the philologists might at some future time "step in and give rise to a heterogeneous, incoherent group of workers, having no interests in common."

It is not much more than a century ago that the philologists opened for mathematical historians rich fields by the discovery of a key to the cuneiform inscriptions of the ancient Babylonians and the discovery of a key to the writings of the ancient Egyptians. The history of the ancient scientific developments is fundamentally connected with the languages of the people of antiquity and hence there seems to be little reason to object to a closer contact between the philologists and the historians of science, especially during the early stages of the development of the history of science in our country. As an instance of the fruitfulness of this contact it may be noted that L. J. Richardson, professor of Latin in the University of California, contributed an interesting article on "Digital reckoning among the ancients" to the first volume of the *American Mathematical Monthly* after it became the official organ of the Mathematical Association of America in 1916.

During the Chicago meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science a good beginning was made towards the encouragement of workers in the history of science in our country. It would seem that only the most serious considerations should be allowed to interfere with the continuance of this encouragement under the influence of a strong national organization. In particular,

differences of opinion as to the most suitable temporary name of the section which aims to unite the workers in the history of science in our land should not be allowed to curtail seriously the efforts of those who believe in such a union. If the modern mathematicians and the modern astronomers could work harmoniously for so many years it seems clear that the historians of science have nothing to fear from the presence of the philologists, especially in so far as these two types of scientists are seeking common ground.

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**FOSSILS—ARE THEY MERELY "PREHISTORIC,"
OR MUST THEY ALSO BE "GEOLOGIC"?**

I AM perfectly willing in my proposed definition of "fossils" to accept a substitute for the term "age," as suggested by Professor Field in his contribution to *SCIENCE* for February 4, if only authorities can agree on what it shall be. Of the various terms used for geological and archeological time divisions—*era*, *period*, *epoch*, *age*—each have been used as designations for the time since the Pleistocene. LeConte refers to this time indifferently as "Psychozoic era," "age of man," and "recent epoch." Schuchert practically agrees with these designations, Chamberlin and Salisbury call it the "human period," Professor Field in the contribution above referred to, speaks of it in one place as the "Psychozoic era," and in another as "the recent geological epoch." For other coordinate or subordinate divisions we read in various works such expressions as "Quaternary period" and "Quaternary epoch" (Brigham), "Neolithic period," "Gunz glacial stage" (Osborn), "Sixth glacial period" (Geikie), "Reindeer period" (Lartet), "Prehistoric period" (Lubbock).

We see in the above variations in usage the usual fate of recommendations of scientific congresses when they attempt to reform and draft into the exacting service of science words that have long led a life of freedom as a part of our common vernacular.

"Prehistoric," however, is not a term of this character. From the time (1851) when it was