

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE AGITATION AGAINST THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION

PROFESSOR J. V. DENNEY, president of the American Association of University Professors, addressed on June 14 the following letter to the moderator of the conference of the Northern Baptist churches meeting in Indianapolis:

As president of the American Association of University Professors, I desire to call attention to the peril confronting our higher institutions of learning at the present time because of the "Fundamentalist" or "anti-evolution" movement which has appeared in two state legislatures and in the constituencies of several colleges controlled by or affiliated with the religious denominations.

Letters from presidents and professors indicate widespread anxiety lest the cause of higher education suffer serious injury through attempts at coercive measures, interfering with the professor's duty to teach the truth of his subject as determined by the body of past and present laborers in his own field and as confirmed by his own conscientious studies and researches. The chief injury is not merely to the professor who loses his position or to the particular institution that sacrifices a permanent aim to a passing fear. It is in the degradation of the office of teacher; in the establishment of distrust and suspicion in the public mind towards all colleges and universities; and in the immediate loss to both church and state of strong forces for good through the slackening of devotion and enthusiasm and the encouragement of casuistry, subtlety and insincerity among those who are called to teach with an eye single to truth.

The colleges controlled by or affiliated with religious bodies are public institutions in the sense that they solicit and receive students on terms common to all good colleges. They impose on applicants no political or religious tests. They forewarn the public of no doctrine in history, economics, literature and the sciences that is essentially at variance with the body of free and accepted teaching in these departments of learning throughout the country. Their professors cooperate in the work of all of the learned societies, and are bound by the code of honor in scientific research and by the obligation of scrupulous honesty of statement in teaching. Any invasion of this high obligation is an attack on manhood in teaching and destructive to real education.

Any college or university, whatever its founda-

tion, that openly or secretly imposes unusual restrictions upon the dissemination of verified knowledge in any subject that it professes to teach at all, or that discourages free discussion and the research for the truth among its professors and students will find itself shunned by professors who are competent and by students who are serious. It will lose the best of its own rightful constituency and will cease to fulfill its high ministry. The same results, disastrous to true education, will follow whether the restrictions are adopted voluntarily by the college itself, or are forced upon its administrative officers by the state legislature, an ecclesiastical body or by powerful influence operating through trustees. The question of legality and of good motive is also irrelevant so far as moral and educational results are concerned.

The five thousand members of the American Association of University Professors in active service in some two hundred colleges and universities of the United States are of one mind on the fundamental necessity of preserving the integrity of the teaching profession. They realize that their work is a sacred trust that can be fulfilled only in freedom of conscience, loyalty to the truth, and a profound sense of duty and of personal responsibility. They claim the support of all good Americans whatever their creed in resisting measures that will prove ruinous to our institutions of higher learning.

THE PROPOSED BOMBAY SCHOOL OF TROPICAL MEDICINE¹

WE learn from India that the government of Bombay has declined to proceed with the project for establishing a School of Tropical Medicine at Bombay. The news is not a little surprising, for the government of Bombay had very definitely expressed its intention to establish the school, and Sir Dorab Tata had promised to contribute a lakh of rupees a year towards the expenditure which was to be incurred. The Bombay School of Tropical Medicine was to have been opened on April 1 last, and all arrangements were made for this purpose. It was only at the last moment that the Bombay government determined to cut out of the budget the whole sum allotted to the school, and issued orders that the scheme should not be proceeded with. In consequence Sir Dorab

¹ From the *British Medical Journal*.

Tata has withdrawn his offer, which was contingent on the government founding a school of tropical medicine at Bombay. As will be seen, matters had gone very far before the government of Bombay repudiated the undertaking it had given. They had gone even further than we have so far indicated, for rather more than a year ago the Royal Society was asked to select professors for the chairs of clinical medicine and therapy and of protozoology in the school. The Royal Society, acting through its Tropical Diseases Committee, issued advertisements widely—in this country, in the dominions and in America. From among the applicants it selected two, one for each chair. The protozoologist selected was an American, but he, we understand, subsequently, on private grounds, withdrew his acceptance. The successful applicant for the other chair, an Australian (Professor N. Hamilton Fairley), resigned his appointment in Australia to become Tata professor of clinical medicine in the Bombay School. The government of Bombay has now given him notice that it will dispenze with his services on October 31. The situation thus brought about is obviously most unsatisfactory, and the matter can not be allowed to rest where it is. When the Royal Society acts for the Indian government and invites applications for positions on definite terms, the candidates selected assume that a written contract is superfluous. Clearly the Royal Society has been placed in a very false position. At the request of the government of India it undertook to select suitable persons to occupy the two chairs. With the authority of the government of Bombay the Royal Society, through its committee, issued advertisements inviting candidates to come forward and stating the terms and conditions of the appointment, which was to be in each case for a term of five years in the first instance, "but may be extended by the government." It is now left in the lurch by the government of Bombay, which professes to find that it has miscalculated its resources and is not in a financial position to carry out its bargain. The Royal Society will, we feel sure, have the support of public opinion in any action it may take, and the medical profession in particular will be anxious to see

that justice is done to Professor Fairley, if not by the government of Bombay, then by the government of India, which can not absolve itself from responsibility for the acts of the provincial government. We understand that a new central research institute for India may shortly be established, probably at Delhi; this may afford the government of India a way out of the false position in which it has been placed by the government of Bombay.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF BELGIUM¹

THE Royal Academy of Belgium celebrated the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its foundation on May 23 and 24 in the presence of a large number of its members and of delegates from other academies and learned institutions. On the Wednesday afternoon, May 24, numerous congratulatory addresses were presented at the Palais des Académies, and the members and visitors were afterwards received at the Hôtel de Ville by the Mayor of Brussels, M. Adolf Max, and his aldermen, MM. Steens, Vande Meulebrouck and Coelst; a reception was held at the Palais des Académies in the evening, where an exhibition of medals and portraits connected with the history of the academy had been arranged. The anniversary celebration itself was held in the large hall of the academy on the afternoon of May 25 in the presence of the king, the minister of arts and science, M. Hubert, formerly rector of the University of Liège, Cardinal Mercier, and the English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Japanese ambassadors. The president, M. Vauthier, in an address of welcome, briefly sketched the history of the academy and its influence on the intellectual development of Belgium. The minister of justice, M. Masson, tendered the congratulations of the Belgian government, and Monseigneur Baudrillart spoke in the name of the Institut de France. Sir William B. Leishman, as vice-president of the Royal Society, represented the British universities and learned societies; he referred to the activities of Belgian bacteriologists and paid a high tribute to the work of M. Jules Bordet. MM. Lameere, Pirenne and Verlant, representing respectively

¹ From *Nature*.