

## INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PLANT SCIENCES

At representative meetings of American botanists (Botanical Society of America, American Phytopathological Society, Ecological Society of America) held in Cincinnati, December, 1923, a proposal suggesting the desirability of holding an international congress for all workers in the fields of the plant sciences (botany in its widest applications) was enthusiastically approved.

In making the proposal it was clearly recognized that in view of preparations made, and then necessarily abandoned, for a Fourth International Botanical Congress in London in 1915 (as authorized by the executive committee of the Brussels Congress, 1910), the British botanists enjoyed, if they wished to exercise it, a prior claim in respect to such arrangements. Further, there were endorsed by the three societies mentioned suggestions that if at the present time British botanists did not wish to undertake arrangements on British soil for such a congress, but would be willing or would prefer to have the initiative taken in the United States, then American botanists would gladly undertake to bring about an international gathering at a date as early as might seem practicable. Representing the three societies, there was appointed an organizing committee consisting of H. C. Cowles (Ecological Society), B. M. Duggar (Botanical Society) and H. H. Whetzel (Phytopathological Society). This committee was authorized to ascertain the wishes of British botanists, and if a favorable sentiment was manifest toward convening the congress in the United States, to proceed with the necessary arrangements.

Communicating with one of the presidents and with the secretary representing the proposed congress in London, of 1915, it seemed that the initiative might well be taken by American botanists, as indicated by excerpts from the letters received.

I think I am able to state with some degree of confidence that British botanists, so far from wishing to maintain any prior claim to holding a congress in Britain at this time or in the immediate future, would welcome the idea of the first post-war meeting being in America. As a matter of fact a British Imperial Congress has been arranged this year in London, and it is in a measure substitutionary for the International Congress which was normally due in London in 1915. It was thought that even in 1924 the time was hardly yet propitious for the International Congress to meet in this country. I am sure we shall all appreciate the delicacy with which you touch on the question of our possible prior claim, and I personally welcome your proposal. (Extract from letter of Professor F. O. Bower, President.)

On the other hand, we should, I am sure, do our best

to render successful a congress initiated in America. . . . I took the opportunity of reading your letter to a small executive committee of the Imperial Congress. The members were much interested and, though unable to speak for British botanists as a whole, were quite in accord with the views I have expressed. (Extract from letter of Dr. A. B. Rendle, Secretary.)

Later there was transmitted by Mr. F. T. Brooks (secretary) a statement from the executive committee of the Imperial Botanical Conference (held in London July 7-16) advising that the conference had no objection to the proposal submitted.

The organizing committee has accordingly proceeded with plans for an international congress, and it has thus far formulated the following general regulations and tentative schedule:

1. An International Congress of Plant Sciences (Fourth International Botanical Congress) shall be held in Ithaca, New York, August 16-23, 1926.
2. Membership in the congress shall be unrestricted and conditional only upon subscribing to any regulations announced and upon the payment of such nominal fee as may be necessary for legitimate expenses in organizing and conducting the congress.
3. In the scope of the congress shall be included the different branches of botanical science together with what are known as its broader applications in the fields of bacteriology, agriculture and forestry—these various aspects to be suitably grouped in sections. To the end that this characterization may be effective and practically inclusive, the cooperation of all the special American societies that may be interested in the general arrangements shall be solicited and urged.
4. The work of the congress shall be primarily with problems of fundamental research and teaching, but adequate opportunity shall be accorded all sections for the discussion of regulatory recommendations of international significance.
5. Ample time shall be reserved in the preparation of the program for excursions of interest to the various sections.
6. Particulars of the meetings, discussions and excursions shall be published as early as practicable.

Through the courtesy of the Imperial Botanical Conference in London and of the Fourth International Conference of Pedology in Rome, public European announcement of the congress has been made. Furthermore, while on a visit to many centers of botanical work in Europe, during the past summer, Dr. J. R. Schramm acted as the official representative of the organizing committee to draw the attention of botanists to the congress, as far as his contacts would permit. Likewise, in the interest of the

congress Dr. H. H. Whetzel and Dr. B. M. Duggar attended the meeting of the British Association at Toronto. A special effort will be made to reach all workers in the plant sciences.

The cooperative interest of the division of biology of the National Research Council and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has been assured. The organizing committee records with special gratification the courtesy of Cornell University in permitting the use of its facilities for the congress, thus assuring a convenient geographical location and a most favorable physical environment. President Farrand's letter is appended.

#### CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Office of the President.

Ithaca, N. Y., Sept. 23, 1924.

Professor H. H. Whetzel,  
College of Agriculture.

Dear Professor Whetzel:

I have been very much interested in hearing of the plans for the International Congress of Plant Sciences to be held in the summer of 1926 and I need not say that the prospect of having that important meeting in Ithaca is a source of great satisfaction to Cornell University. That our resources will be put entirely at the disposal of the congress goes without saying and the members may be assured of a very warm welcome.

I know of nothing which reacts with more benefit to a university than assemblies of this kind and I venture to hope that visitors from a distance may find something of interest here to justify the choice of place of meeting.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) LIVINGSTON FARRAND.

The date arranged for the congress has been selected after taking into consideration a variety of circumstances affecting both the place of meeting and the convenience of those attending from far and near.

Organizing Committee:

H. C. COWLES, *Secretary*

B. M. DUGGAR, *Chairman*

H. H. WHETZEL

### SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

#### LOGARITHMETICA BRITANNICA

THE Cambridge University Press is issuing under the auspices of the Biometrical Laboratory, University College, London, "*Logarithmetica Britannica*," a table of logarithms to twenty decimal places by Alex. J. Thompson, of the General Registrar's Office, Somerset House, London. Part Nine, the first to be published, contains the numbers 90,000 to 100,000. In the prefatory note Professor Karl Pearson writes:

This year is the tercentenary of the first great work of Henry Briggs, the friend and coadjutor of Napier of

Merchistoun, and the computer of the first, and still perhaps the most valuable, table of common logarithms. Briggs's *Arithmetica Logarithmica* appeared in 1624, one year before the death of King James. The growth of British mathematics amid the bloody faction and political turmoil of the Stuarts—especially noteworthy in the case of the wizard Laird of Merchistoun—is one of the remarkable facts in the history of science. But this is not the occasion to enter into that matter or indeed into the life of Briggs himself. The purpose of this publication lies in the endeavor to celebrate the tercentenary of his great achievement in a worthy manner. We would, however, willingly have provided a portrait of Briggs could such have been discovered, but inquiries in Cambridge, Oxford, London, of Lord Napier and Ettrick, and of the Yorkshire family of which he was a member have been fruitless, and the reader must be content with a specimen page of the scarce tract of 1617 in which Briggs first drew the notice of the scientific world to the advantages of logarithms to the base 10.

When it came to my knowledge that the French proposed to issue a fourteen figure table and the Germans a fifteen figure table, it seemed to me that it was fitting that the land wherein logarithms were cradled should rise to the occasion and issue a standard table—*Logarithmetica Britannica*—to twenty figures.

In a certain sense the day of logarithmic tables to 4, 5, 6 or 7 figures is past. The users of such tables are either ignorant of the existence of slide-rules and mechanical calculators, or else unfortunately can not afford them. Where much computing has to be done logarithms to a few figures are rarely if ever used. What are used and are often badly needed are logarithmic tables to 10, 15 or 20 figures. They are wanted for work where the more or less customary machines with  $9 \times 10$  showing 18 and the more unusual and costly machines with  $12 \times 12$  showing 20 figures on the slide fail to give results of adequate accuracy without great expenditure of labor. In statistical and computing laboratories—especially in cases where new tables have to be prepared for publication—the original Briggs or original Vega are in greater demand than any more contracted logarithmic tables. Yet their high cost, their rarity and uncorrected errors render, as the French and the Germans have recognized, new tables desirable.

#### THE DEEP SEA OCEANOGRAPHIC EXPEDITION OF THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

PLANS for the Ninth Expedition of the Department of Tropical Research are well advanced. The *Arc-turus* has been officially turned over to William Beebe, director of the forthcoming trip, and the plans for the building of the laboratory, extra staterooms, photographic room, etc., are complete.

The expedition will start early in January, and the first stop will be in the Sargasso Sea. The eastern

<sup>1</sup> From the Bulletin of the New York Zoological Society.