

A certain Dr. Etheridge, of the British Museum, has been widely cited by the Fundamentalists as an "eminent authority." Just who this Etheridge was and the extent to which he represents the British Museum appears from the following letter addressed to Dr. James H. Snowdon, of the Western Theological Seminary, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dr. Snowdon had been annoyed by the citation of an "authority" for whose importance he found no one to vouch, and hence wrote to Professor Harmer. A copy of this letter was furnished the writer by Dr. Snowdon for purposes of reference or publication.

British Museum (Natural History)
Cromwell Road
London, S. W. 7
25 July, 1922

Dear Sir:

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of July 8, referring to an alleged quotation, from some work by Dr. Etheridge, on the subject of Evolution.

This quotation, or a paraphrase of it, is more or less familiar to us, and it is not long since I had to answer another enquiry on the subject from your country. I believe the Dr. Etheridge in question to have been Robert Etheridge, Junr., who was Assistant Keeper of Geology in this Museum from 1881 to 1891. The remainder of his life was spent in Australia, and he died in 1920.

A considerable list of papers by Robert Etheridge the younger is given in the "Catalogue of the Library of the British Museum (Natural History)," vol. II, 1904, pp. 544, 545. A diligent search in the originals might result in the discovery of the quotation, but we should not think it worth while spending much time in looking for it. I regret that I am not in a position to give you the reference. Should you ever discover it I should be obliged if you would let me know.

In one respect your quotation differs from the form in which I last met it. In its present aspect it claims to prove the falsity of the views of those who accept the theory of Evolution. It might be possible for a cautious Biologist to maintain that a theory like this is incapable of exact proof, but it would certainly be equally true that it was incapable of disproof.

Mr. Etheridge's opinion on this subject should not be considered as in any way representing scientific opinion in this Museum. While differences of opinion may exist as to the nature of the causes which have induced Evolution in animals and plants, it is generally admitted that the theory of Evolution, irrespective of the way in which it has been brought about, constitutes the groundwork which entitles Biology to be considered a Science.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

SIDNEY F. HARMER
Director.

The publication of these letters seems justifiable, because in these piping times of reaction, one may

at any time be called upon to definitely refute statements by a more effective means than his personal declaration that an author could only have meant thus and so; or that an alleged authority is no great authority at all, if indeed he made any such statements.

W. C. CURTIS

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE MUSEUM OF SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY

THE Museum of Scientific Instruments at Oxford University was declared open by Lord Crawford on May 5. We learn from an article in the *London Times* that it is housed in the Old Ashmolean Building and is the result of the gift to the university by Mr. Lewis Evans of his remarkable collection. These instruments in Mr. Evans's collection have been obtained from many sources during more than 40 years, and the presentation of them to the university has given Oxford a new scientific museum, which is appropriately housed in the beautiful building where the first public museum of its kind was opened in 1683.

Additions to Mr. Evans's collection have been made by several other persons, and some apparatus has been loaned for exhibition by colleges, so that there are now to be seen there instruments of the exquisite workmanship of the Middle Ages together with some of much earlier date, which illustrate the history of many sciences. Specially interesting among these are the portable astrolabes and dials used by travellers to calculate the time by day or night. There are examples of these from times as early as that of St. Paul, and there are specimens of the styles in various countries and centuries down to the times of Columbus and Newton. The collection of 63 astrolabes includes many interesting exhibits, and with those already in Oxford forms the largest and most representative series in the world. The earliest astrolabe is the Persian one of Ahmad and Mahmud, dated 984, the first dated scientific instrument known. The portable dials show the work of makers in all the countries of Europe.

There are several globes of various periods, sets of mathematical instruments, survey instruments, magnets and early compasses, telescopes, microscopes and other optical instruments, and a library containing about 1,000 volumes relating to scientific instruments, astronomy and dialling, about 40 of them being in manuscript. The whole is accommodated in the building, which is believed by many to have been built from plans of Wren for the permanent home of the Royal Society in Arundel Gardens in London.

At the opening ceremony, the vice-chancellor, Mr. J. Wells, who presided, said one reason why they in Oxford were able to show so many links with the scientific past was that after the end of the seventeenth century Oxford went to sleep in relation to scientific matters and the study of science was not always actively pursued. Whereas the Royal Society scrapped their old instruments and put in new ones. Oxford had not been careful to replace its instruments. Thus Oxford was more rich in old scientific apparatus than almost any other university in the world.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ENGINEERING AND INDUSTRY

FROM the New York *Times* we learn that the plan to establish a National Museum of Engineering and Industry under the Smithsonian Institution drew together on June 18 many distinguished scientists, engineers and industrialists.

The occasion was a luncheon-meeting at the Bankers' Club of those sponsoring the movement, which was started a year or so ago to arouse interest in the project. Samuel Insull, the leading figure in the mid-western public utility field, was formally installed as president of the association for 1925-26. Incidentally it was disclosed by Thomas Ewing, who presided, that \$1,000,000 has already been pledged toward the \$10,000,000 fund which will be raised to pay for the erection of the building in Washington.

Mr. Insull succeeds as president Dr. Elihu Thomson, under whose incumbency the germ of the idea for an institution which will put the United States in the category of European nations having similar museums was developed. The government is expected to provide the site for the institution and it is hoped that the congress will aid in furthering and maintaining it.

H. F. J. Porter is the executive secretary of the organization charged with the task of coordinating the activities of the various professions and industries supporting the project. Vice-presidents are Drs. Edward G. Acheson, Charles F. Brush, L. H. Baekeland, Frank J. Sprague, Thomas A. Edison, Edward Weston, Orville Wright. George E. Roberts is treasurer.

The Board of Trustees include Mr. Insull as chairman; R. F. Bach, B. C. Batcheller, F. H. Colvin, James Craig, E. O. Cutler, Norman Dodge, Thomas Ewing, Colonel Michael Friedsam, Major H. A. Gillis, Henry Goldmark, F. A. Halsey, George Iles, Professor D. C. Jackson, Luis Jackson, W. W. Macon, L. C. Marburg, H. P. Merriam, W. N. Polakov, A. J. Poole, H. F. J. Porter, D. S. Simpson, Dr. Elmer A. Sperry, Professor Holland Thompson and F. A.

Waldron. Honorary members are Dr. Charles W. Eliot, General George W. Goethals, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, Charles M. Schwab, Melville E. Stone and Dr. Elihu Thomson.

Many of the aforementioned were present at the meeting, as well as many prominent men not identified with the organization as members. At the head table were Samuel Rea, president of the Pennsylvania System; Elbert H. Gary, chairman of the United States Steel Corporation; Mr. Insull, head of the Middle West Utilities Company, Commonwealth Edison Company of Chicago and other utility companies; Mr. Edison, John W. Davis, Dr. Alexander C. Humphreys, president of Stevens Institute, and Mr. Ewing, the patent attorney.

Speakers were Mr. Insull, F. R. Low, president of the Society of Mechanical Engineers; Farley Osgood, president of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, and Dr. Humphreys.

FISHERIES CONSERVATION CONFERENCE

THE Fisheries Conservation Conference of May 22, 1925, called by the Secretary of Commerce and attended by representatives of the fish commissions of the Atlantic and Gulf Coast states, was held at the Department of Commerce to consider a procedure for saving certain of our Atlantic coast fisheries from final destruction. Among the subjects discussed were the fisheries for shad, sturgeon and lobsters, and incidentally the questions of the control of fisheries in boundary waters and the destruction of undersized or immature fish.

The conference requested the Secretary of Commerce to appoint, with the approval of the governors of the states, a commission to work out the various problems leading to the rehabilitation of lobster, shad, sturgeon and other fishes of our coastal waters and agreed as to the necessity for concerted action to prevent further depletion.

The resolution adopted by the conferees follows:

WHEREAS, The necessity for concerted action by the coast states to protect national fisheries has been forcefully called to our attention by Secretary Hoover; and

WHEREAS, The secretary has seen fit to call this conference for the purpose of devising ways and means for rehabilitating these fisheries; be it

Resolved, That representatives here assembled go on record as indorsing the purpose of the conference and expressing on behalf of our various states our gratitude for Mr. Hoover's intelligent and patriotic interest in calling the conference: be it further

Resolved, That it is the desire of the representatives here assembled that the secretary shall, with the approval of the governors, appoint a commission composed of representatives from each of the fish commissions of the