

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

SECOND CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTS¹

THE second international conference on the standardization of biological products was held at Geneva from August 31 to September 3, under the presidency of Dr. H. H. Dale, F.R.S., of London, and was attended by seventeen representatives from various countries. The members of the conference were welcomed by Dr. Rajehman on behalf of the Health Section of the League of Nations. The main business of the conference was to discuss the standardization of such products as pituitary extract, insulin, digitalis, salvarsan, thyroid gland, ergot and others, and each of these was the subject of a good discussion, and resolutions were formulated which received the unanimous support of the conference.

The first product which received detailed consideration by the conference was pituitary extract, upon which a report was presented by Professor Voegtlin. After a somewhat lengthy discussion resolutions were arrived at, declaring that the dry (acetone) extracted substance of the fresh posterior lobe of the pituitary gland, which was recommended by Professor Voegtlin to the Edinburgh conference as suitable for adoption as a standard of activity for pituitary extracts, and which has since been adopted as a standard for this purpose in the United States *Pharmacopoeia* (tenth edition), should be now definitely accepted as the international standard, that the authority responsible in any country for biological standardization should prepare such quantities of the standard as were needed for distribution, and that the health organization of the league should be asked to furnish a small sample of the standard as originally prepared for examination by the Edinburgh conference to any authority which might require it for the confirmation of its own national standard.

Professor Macleod introduced the subject of insulin, and recommended the adoption as the international standard of the dried preparation of insulin hydrochloride which, at the request of the Edinburgh conference of 1923, has been made at the National Institute for Medical Research, London, 1 mg of this preparation to be regarded as containing 8 units of insulin. Professor Meyer mentioned a new method devised by Professor Loewi, of the University of Graz, depending upon, what Professor Loewi held to be proved, an alteration by insulin of the distribution of dextrose between the plasma and corpuscles of shed blood. It was agreed that this method deserved further careful investigation, but that no recommendation could yet be made as to its adoption. The recom-

mendation made by Professor Macleod was agreed to, and it was arranged that the standard preparation should be kept by the Medical Research Council, which would undertake to test the permanence of its potency from time to time, and that samples of the preparation should be sent to some responsible organization in each country which would undertake its further distribution to testing laboratories.

The conference accepted the principle of the standardization of salvarsan and its derivatives in relation to permanent standard preparations, and Professor Kolle, of Frankfort, was asked to accept the responsibility of preparing, maintaining and distributing the standards for the various products of this class.

Thyroid gland preparations were also discussed, and it was agreed, on the suggestion of Professor Reid Hunt, to adopt the standard of iodine content. The question of ergot was introduced by Professor Trendelenburg, who said that, of a number of testing methods he had examined, a test based on the paralyzing effect of these alkaloids on the inhibitory action of adrenaline on the movements of the isolated intestine of rabbits and guinea-pigs appeared to be most promising. The conference decided that the question of the biological standardization of ergot was not yet ripe for final decision.

After various other substances had been considered, Professor Poulsson presented a memorandum dealing with methods proposed for standardizing for vitamin content the substances used in medicine for supplying vitamins to patients. He recommended the method already adopted in the United States *Pharmacopoeia* (tenth edition) for standardizing cod-liver oil for the growth-promoting factor (vitamin A). He stated that tests were already available, though less certainly quantitative in their interactions, for the antirachitic vitamin, the water-soluble growth-promoting vitamin and the antiscorbutic vitamin. A discussion ensued, in the course of which it was suggested by Dr. Dale that the present conference was hardly suitable for the discussion of the whole question of the biological standard of vitamins. It appeared to him that such a discussion could more suitably be undertaken by a special conference analogous to the serological conference, attended by recognized experts in this special branch of inquiry.

THE COLUMBIA-PRESBYTERIAN
MEDICAL CENTER

A REPORT on the progress of the fund to provide the Presbyterian Hospital's share of the cost of construction of the new Medical Center being erected at Broadway and 168th Street has been made public by Dean Sage, president of the hospital. Mr. Sage

¹ From the *British Medical Journal*.

said that a total of \$6,250,000 had been received to date. The sum needed is \$7,000,000.

In disclosing the status of the fund Mr. Sage revealed that a gift of \$100,000 had been made anonymously a short time ago. Earlier several other substantial donations had been turned over to the fund by anonymous givers. Among the larger subscriptions of recent receipt were a gift of \$5,000 from William D. Baldwin and one of \$5,000 from Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Kuser, of Bernardsville, N. J.

Mr. Sage announced that the two gifts of \$25,000 each made last spring by Miss Annie Burr Jennings and Mrs. Walter B. James had been made to establish two five-bed medical wards. The wards are to be memorials to "the distinguished services of Dr. Walter B. James to the Presbyterian Hospital and to medical science."

A committee has been formed drawn from the hospital Board of Managers and from friends of the institution to speed the raising of the \$750,000 still required. The committee was named at a luncheon at the Downtown Association and the plans call for the raising of the sum before the winter.

A year ago when the Medical Center, which will be one of the finest of its kind in the world, took form, the hospital had on hand about \$2,500,000 of the sum required. Columbia University, which joins in the establishment of the center, had its share ready. In a public appeal for help, which had as its goal \$4,500,000, the hospital last winter raised the sum of \$3,640,000.

The annual meeting of the Uptown Medical Center Association, Inc., was held on October 5, at the Washington Heights Chamber of Commerce, 1042 St. Nicholas Avenue. The association was formed by residents of the Heights section to collect \$400,000, with which to build a floor in the hospital unit of the center and also to cooperate in any way possible in the construction of the entire plant. So far the association has raised more than \$156,000.

The first unit of the center, a \$10,000,000 building, which will house the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University and also the hospital, is now under construction. Ground was broken this spring and the building is expected to be ready for occupancy in 1927. The university is contributing \$3,000,000 to erect its section of the building.

THE SHEDD AQUARIUM

A SPECIAL investigative mission for the Shedd Aquarium left Chicago on October 3 to study the construction, scientific and educational features and management of European aquariums with a view that the Shedd aquarium to be built in Chicago will be

an improvement over any existing institution of its kind.

The mission is comprised of Walter H. Chute, associate director of the Shedd Aquarium, and Leslie C. Stokes, engineer for Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, architects, who will draw the plans for the Chicago institution. They will be gone about two months. Immediately upon their return they will, in company with George F. Morse, director of the Shedd Aquarium, visit and make a similar study of American aquariums.

Mr. Chute and Mr. Stokes will, during their research, take into account both the mistakes and the desirable features of the leading aquariums of the world. Their findings and deductions will be incorporated in the plans to be drawn by Mr. E. R. Graham. European aquariums which will be visited include those at Naples, Monaco, Berlin, Antwerp, London, Leipzig, Dresden, Manchester, Plymouth, Blackpool and others.

At Naples special attention will be given to that aquarium's famous invertebrate collection. The Naples aquarium has been especially successful in keeping delicate species of marine life on exhibition. Methods used in handling them will be studied. The biological research laboratories of the Monaco institution will be especially studied there, and in Berlin the only artificial salt water system that has proved satisfactory will be investigated.

Both the Antwerp and London aquariums are new ones. The artificial lighting in the tanks at London is especially interesting and effective, as well as natural backgrounds used there and designed by Miss Proctor, curator of reptiles in the Zoological Gardens in Regents Park.

THE OPTICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

THE tenth annual meeting of the Optical Society of America will be held at Cornell University from October 29 to 31. In addition to a number of contributed papers and committee reports on such subjects as radiation, spectrometry, photography, physical optics, geometrical optics and physiological optics, there are two invited papers, one by Professor Simon H. Gage, of Cornell University, on "The microscope: Its development and some recent improvements," and the other by Professor E. M. Chamot, of Cornell University, on "Chemical microscopy: Its aims and possibilities."

There are two other important items on the program: Dr. H. E. Ives, of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc., president of the society, will deliver his retiring presidential address on "Some photographic problems encountered in the transmission of pictures by wire"; and Professor Dayton C. Miller, of the