

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE SCIENTIFIC LABORATORIES AND UNIVERSITY ASSISTANTS IN ITALY

PROFESSOR ERMANNO FIORETTI, in an address before the Italian Chamber of Deputies, has called attention, as reported by the correspondent of the *Journal* of the American Medical Association, to some problems of the Italian universities which are awaiting solution, namely, the mode of functioning of the scientific laboratories and the working conditions of the university assistants. The speaker emphasized that the university laboratories should receive larger appropriations, as at present they have not adequate resources for the researches that they are called on to conduct in the interest of scientific progress. Recently there was organized in Italy a campaign against experimental studies carried out on animals, and at a meeting in Rome of the Society for the Protection of Animals, which was attended by many Italian and foreign women, a protest against vivisection was launched. But, Professor Fioretti explained, experimental studies are the very basis of the progress of medical science and certain discoveries (for instance, that of Luciani on the function of the cerebellum) would not have been made without the aid of vivisection. It is necessary, however, that vivisection be well controlled and be carried out solely in authorized institutes. According to the speaker, reducing the number of Italian universities, as has been suggested in some quarters, should not be considered. That is the opinion held also by the head of the government. But there is need of distributing the various faculties in such a manner that there shall be fewer faculties of medicine but provided with greater resources than at present.

The university assistants, Professor Fioretti stated, have not only the duty of assisting in scientific researches and laboratory studies but also the complex task of directing the young students and starting them in their laboratory work. It is necessary, therefore, to consider their living conditions, in order to check the exodus of young men from the scientific institutes and the present scarcity of university assistants. In addition to giving them more pay there is need also of guaranteeing the stability of their career, which is at the mercy of the incumbent in the professorial chair, who may dismiss at his pleasure young men who have had years of experience as assistants. These conditions lower the scientific and didactic performance of the assistants, as is evident also from the results of the state examinations for admittance to the practice of medicine, which this year have shown thirty per cent. of failures. According to Professor Fioretti, the university career, which is long, should be shortened, so that there will be more chairs available for the young professors.

EXPEDITION OF THE DANA

THE *Dana* dropped anchor at Plymouth on June 22 on the conclusion of a two years' oceanographical cruise, which, according to a correspondent of the *London Times*, may prove to be the most important of its kind since *H.M.S. Challenger* returned from her famous quest in 1876. She had anchored at Plymouth on her outward journey precisely two years previously, on June 20, 1928.

The ship is the Royal Danish research ship *Dana*, purchased in 1921 and adapted by the Danish government for oceanographical research. She is "sister" to the *George Bligh* and the *Explorer*, research ships of the English Fisheries Department and the Fishery Board for Scotland, respectively. The cruise was not her first, nor is it likely to be her last, but it is improbable that, for some time to come, she will again undertake so long and extensive a voyage.

The leader of the expedition is Dr. Johannes Schmidt and the commander of the ship Captain G. Hansen. The expenses of the enterprise are shared between the Danish government and the Carlsberg Foundation, whose generosity to science is a household word in Denmark, and the expedition is under the direct patronage of Prince Valdemar of Denmark, the youngest brother of the late Queen Alexandra. The *Dana* left Copenhagen on June 14, 1928, and is expected to return to her home port in a few days, after calling, at the invitation of the Government of the French Republic, at Boulogne.

Although the route of the expedition was largely dictated by Dr. Schmidt's desire to study the eels, the main purpose of it was a general investigation of the oceans, and throughout the voyage the oceans have been studied from every point of view by means of the most up-to-date apparatus of marine research—apparatus undreamed of in the days of the *Challenger*. The *Dana* is equipped with echo-sounding gear, by means of which a large number of soundings have been taken; water samples have been taken at various depths from the surface to the bottom, and the temperature and chemical composition of the water at these depths observed and recorded. Collections have been made throughout of the abundant planktonic life of the sea and of the large marine fauna, down to the greatest depths.

The full results of the expedition can not be known for years, because the mass of material collected will take years of work by many investigators to sort, identify and tabulate. In fact, it is only now, when this two years' cruise has reached an end, that reports are coming forward on the material collected in the cruise of the expeditions of 1920-22, by means