SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE IMPORTATION OF SCIENTIFIC SPECIMENS AND APPARATUS INTO GREAT BRITAIN

As the result of a report by the Association of British Zoologists, the council of the British Association in February, 1931, appointed a committee to consider action with a view to the amelioration of the customs regulations affecting the importation of scientific specimens and apparatus. Following upon discussion between officers of the association and the Customs House authorities, the latter have most kindly supplied the association with a memorandum on the reliefs from customs duties on scientific instruments and cinematograph films, and from the import prohibitions on plumage likely to be of use to scientific workers, together with a note on procedure in respect of the importation of scientific specimens preserved in spirit.

The memorandum on scientific instruments and cinematograph films was supplied confidentially to enable the association to advise *bona fide* scientific workers, but not for general publication, since some of the relaxations are extra-statutory and liable to modification or withdrawal as the interests of the revenue may demand. The British Association is, however, prepared to advise on specific applications from scientific workers or societies. Enquiries should be addressed to the secretary of the British Association at Burlington House, London, W.1.

It emerged in the course of discussion that some of the difficulties which have been encountered by scientific workers under the customs regulations might have been avoided by previous communication with the Board of Customs and Excise.

THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTO RICO AND THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TENTATIVE arrangements for cooperation in research and extension work between the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the College of Agriculture of the University of Porto Rico, at Mayaguez, were made by Dr. C. W. Warburton, director of extension work, and by Dr. James T. Jardine, chief of the Office of Experiment Stations, in the course of a brief visit to the island, from which they returned on December 21. This cooperation was authorized by an act of congress, approved on March 4, which provided that the several experiment station and extension acts should apply to Porto Rico, beginning on July 1, with an initial appropriation of $15,000 for research and $50,000 for extension work, these sums to be increased respectively by $5,000 and $10,000 annually until the totals to which Porto Rico is entitled under the federal act are reached.

The insular government of Porto Rico now maintains an agricultural experiment station and an agricultural extension service, and these will be included in the cooperative agreement. For many years this department has maintained an experiment station at Mayaguez, the work of which will now be coordinated with that of the cooperative insular station. The extension work on the island will be expanded to include home economics and boys' and girls' club work.

"Though Porto Rico is feeling the effects of the world-wide depression severely, harvesting of the largest crop of sugar ever produced on the island is now beginning, and the unemployment situation there will be greatly relieved," according to Dr. Warburton. "Failure to sell the 1931 tobacco crop at satisfactory prices has curtailed planting for the 1932 crop, vigorous efforts having been made in some sections to secure an agreement among growers to plant no tobacco at this time. The 1931 production of coffee was very low, this crop not yet having recovered from the 1928 hurricane. Agricultural and educational agencies are conducting a vigorous campaign for the production of larger supplies of food crops for local use, in an effort to feed the rapidly increasing population and reduce the imports of foodstuffs."

TO GUADALUPE ISLAND

THE fascination of studies in island life is answerable for the latest expedition to Guadalupe, the little-visited volcanic island 140 miles west of northern Lower California. Mr. Templeton Crocker, of San Francisco, recently visited this remarkable island on his yacht *Zaca* in the interest of the California Academy of Sciences and spent three days (November 14 to 16) exploring the island and adjacent waters. Mr. Crocker was accompanied by Mr. John Thomas Howell, botanist of the California Academy of Sciences, who conducted the scientific studies. From several stations on the island collections were obtained of insects, birds, fishes, plants and land and marine shells. Although the season was at low ebb for extensive plant collections, the wet season just having begun, thirty-three collections of native vascular plants were made, four of which have not been known heretofore from the island. In addition to these vascular plants many mosses, hepatics, and lichens were collected. Among the specimens of special interest brought back is a 300-pound Giant Black Marlin Spearfish (*Makaira marlina*), an interesting big game fish recently described from the Pacific off Cape San Lucas. This specimen was taken by Mr. Crocker personally and brought to the academy, where it is now being prepared as a permanent exhibit to be placed in the Steinhart Aquarium.

A census was taken of the Guadalupe elephant seal by Mr. Crocker and Captain D. Rotch. In the large herd on the west side of the island near Elephant Rock approximately 900 individuals were counted, of which about one third were males. On a small beach on the east side of the island, near the Northeast Anchorage, 27 seals were numbered. At neither of these beaches was any seen dead, and the general condition of the animals seemed to be good. The valuable data and collections made on this expedition to Guadalupe Island make it very gratifying to know that a business man of Mr. Crocker's prominence has shown such a keen interest in the pursuit of scientific field studies.

JOHN THOMAS HOWELL
CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

PROFESSORSHIPS AT YALE UNIVERSITY IN MEMORY OF GIBBS AND SUMNER

THE memory of two distinguished professors of Yale University, Josiah Willard Gibbs and William Graham Sumner, has been perpetuated by the establishment at the university of the Josiah Willard Gibbs professorship of mathematics and the William Graham Sumner professorship of the science of society, both made possible by funds pledged in 1927 as a part of the Yale Endowment Fund and now paid to the university for this purpose.

Two members of the Yale faculty have been appointed to these professorships. The first Gibbs professor of mathematics is Dr. Ernest William Brown, previously Sterling professor of mathematics; the first Sumner professor of the science of society is Dr. Albert Galloway Keller, now professor of this subject.

Professor Brown, who has been a professor at Yale since 1907, is an authority on celestial and especially lunar mechanics. A graduate of Cambridge University (Christ's College), he has won the Royal Medal of the Royal Society, of which he is a fellow; the gold medal of the Royal Astronomical Society, and the Bruce Medal of the Astronomical Society in this country. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and is a former president of the American Mathematical Society. Professor Keller has been a member of the Yale faculty since 1899. He is the author of several authoritative works in the field of social science. Professor Sumner had spent his later years collecting material for a monumental work to be known as "The Science of Society." On his death, his successor at Yale, Professor Keller, took up the work, and after twenty-five years of preparation, published four volumes under this title in 1927 through the Yale University Press which had previously issued four volumes of Sumner's collected essays under the editorship of Professor Keller.

The announcement from the office of the secretary of Yale University characterizes the work of Gibbs as follows:

Professor Josiah Willard Gibbs, who has been called "the first physical chemist," graduated from Yale College in 1858. He received the doctorate from Yale in 1863, and after tutoring at the university for one term, spent three years in Europe. In 1871 he was appointed professor of mathematical physics at Yale, a position which he held until his death in 1903. Many honors and degrees and medals came to him, among these being the Rumford Medal from the American Academy and the Copley Medal from the Royal Society of London. Although he was not in the strictest sense of the word a chemist, Professor Gibbs is generally considered to have made the greatest single contribution to theoretical chemistry made by an American. In 1876–78 he published a series of papers on "The Equilibrium of Heterogeneous Substances." Because of the strictly mathematical treatment of the subject and the prevailing lack of familiarity of chemists with higher mathematics, its value was not recognized, nor was the great principle involved used by chemists for several years.

The great value of the "Phase Rule," a principle evolved from Professor Gibbs' mathematical discussion, is now acknowledged by all working in the field of theoretical chemistry. The layman, however, does not realize the great practical use which is made of this principle first developed by Gibbs. The familiar carbon-iron diagram, which is the basis of the metallurgy of steel, is based upon it. The whole subject of alloys and the science of metallography is founded on it. The work which has explained the constitution of portland cement was only possible through this rule. These are but a few examples of its value and versatility.

AWARD OF THE FIRST RICHARDS GOLD MEDAL TO PROFESSOR ARTHUR A. NOYES

THE Richards Gold Medal for conspicuous achievement in chemistry has been awarded by the Northeastern Section of the American Chemical Society to Professor Arthur A. Noyes, director of the Gates Chemical Laboratory of the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, according to an announcement made by Professor William P. Ryan, chairman of the section. The medal will be presented at the time of the annual meeting early next May.

The Richards Medal was established by the Northeastern Section in 1929 to commemorate the many fundamental contributions made to chemistry by the late Theodore William Richards, who was professor of chemistry in Harvard University for over twenty-five years and the only American chemist to receive the Nobel prize. He was a member of the Northeastern Section for thirty years. A trust fund of $10,000 to endow the medal has been raised by a committee consisting of Drs. Lyman C. Newell, Ar-