

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS

THE Nobel prize in physics for 1936 has been awarded jointly to Dr. Carl David Anderson, of the California Institute of Technology, and Dr. V. F. Hess, of the University of Innsbruck, discoverer of cosmic radiation in 1912; Dr. Anderson was twenty-seven years old when he discovered the positron, or positive electron, in 1932, while investigating cosmic rays.

THE Nobel prize in chemistry for 1936 has been awarded to Dr. Peter Debye, of the University of Berlin. Dr. Debye, known for the Debye-Huckle theory in physical chemistry, gave an address at the Harvard Tercentenary celebration.

DR. WILLIAM E. RITTER, emeritus professor of zoology at the University of California, emeritus director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and honorary president of Science Service, celebrated his eightieth birthday on November 19.

DR. GEORGE HENRY FOX, for many years a member of the faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, celebrated his ninetieth birthday on October 8. Dr. Fox was clinical professor of diseases of the skin from 1881 to 1904 and professor of dermatology from 1904 to 1907.

At a dinner to be held in London on November 24, a presentation from supporters of the British Science Guild will be made to Sir Richard Gregory, editor of *Nature*, who is chairman of the Council of Management, in recognition of his services to science generally and to the British Science Guild in particular. The president of the guild, the Right Hon. Lord Melchett, will preside.

DR. DONALD DEXTER VAN SLYKE, of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, has been awarded the Philip A. Conne Gold Medal of the Chemists Club, New York City, in recognition of his work in physiological chemistry.

At the recent meeting in London of the ninety-fifth session of the College of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain the Hanbury Medal was presented to Dr. Frank Lee Tyman.

Nature states that the council of the British Illuminating Engineering Society has awarded the Gaster Memorial Premium to Ralph G. Hopkinson, for his paper on "The Photographic Representation of Street Lighting Installations," read before the joint meeting of the Illuminating Engineering Society and the Royal Photographic Society last December, and the Silver Jubilee Commemoration Award to W. R. Stevens, for his experimental work on "Thermal Endurance of Illuminating Glassware."

PROFESSOR THEODOR VON KÁRMÁN, director of the Daniel Guggenheim Graduate School of Aeronautics of the California Institute of Technology, has been appointed Rouse Ball lecturer at the University of Cambridge for the year 1936-37.

At the fifty-second annual meeting of the Indiana Academy of Science, held at Central Normal College, Danville, from November 5 to 7, under the presidency of Ray C. Friesner, of Butler University, officers elected for the ensuing year were: *President*, W. E. Edington, mathematics, DePauw University; *Vice-president*, C. A. Malott, geology, Indiana University; *Secretary*, L. A. Test, chemistry, Purdue University; *Treasurer*, W. P. Morgan, botany, Indiana Central College; *Editor*, Paul Weatherwax, botany, Indiana University; *Press Secretary*, M. W. Lyon, Jr., South Bend Clinic; *Academy Trustee*, John S. Wright, Eli Lilly Company. About 550 members were present. Ninety papers were presented before the nine sections of the academy. The address of the retiring president was entitled "Indiana as a Critical Botanical Area."

DR. JAMES FISHER has been appointed dean of the faculty of the Michigan College of Mining and Technology, Houghton. Dr. Fisher, who is head of the department of mathematics and physics, has been associated with the teaching staff of the college since 1896.

DR. DONALD SHEEHAN, of Victoria University, Manchester, will succeed Professor Emeritus H. D. Senior as professor of anatomy and director of the anatomical laboratories of the College of Medicine of New York University. The appointment will become effective on September 1, 1937.

DR. JOHN HOMANS, clinical professor of surgery in the Harvard Medical School and surgeon to the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, has been appointed visiting professor of surgery in the Yale University School of Medicine and surgeon-in-chief of the New Haven Hospital, in place of Dr. Samuel C. Harvey, who has leave of absence from November 1 to June 30.

DR. FRANK R. PETERSON, associate professor of surgery in the College of Medicine of the State University of Iowa, has been appointed professor and head of the department of surgery, succeeding the late Dr. Howard L. Beyre.

JOHN F. WYCKOFF, formerly instructor in mathematics at South Dakota State College, and Dr. Thomas L. Downs, Jr., formerly instructor and tutor in mathematics at Harvard University, have been appointed instructors in mathematics at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn.

DR. ARTHUR HAAS, formerly professor of physics at the University of Vienna, the University of Leipzig and the University of London, is this year professor of theoretical physics at the University of Nôtre Dame. Dr. Haas made his first visit to America in 1927, at which time he lectured at leading universities. He was one of the guest speakers at the Harvard Tercentenary this past summer.

OLIVER SHEWELL FRANKS, fellow of Queen's College, University of Oxford, has been appointed professor of moral philosophy to succeed the late Professor A. A. Bowman.

DR. HERMANN BURIAN, formerly assistant to the director of the eye clinic of the University of Bern, has been appointed visiting research fellow in the department of physiologic optics at the Medical School of Dartmouth College.

THE Committee on Scientific Research of the American Medical Association has awarded grants to Dr. Warren O. Nelson, of Wayne University, to aid in the continuation of his studies on the effects of androgenic substances in the rat; to Dr. Wilbert H. McGaw, of the School of Medicine of Western Reserve University, to develop an auscultatory method of diagnosing and following the progress of bone fractures and other bone disorders; to Dr. William J. Turner, Chicago, for the study of porphyrins, porphyria and the urinary pigments of porphyria, and to Drs. H. P. Smith, E. D. Warner and K. M. Brinkhous, of the department of pathology at the State University of Iowa, for research on blood clotting.

PAUL MARSHALL REA, director of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, has resigned, effective on December 31. He was granted leave that he may resume at once researches on which he was engaged when he took the post three years ago.

DR. RICHARD S. AUSTIN, professor of pathology in the College of Medicine of the University of Cincinnati, has been appointed a member of the Cincinnati Board of Health in the place of the late Dr. William B. Wherry.

DR. EDWARD W. WALLACE, pharmacologist of the Food and Drug Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, resigned on November 1 to become pharmacologist at the National Institute of Health, Washington, D. C.

JULIAN M. AVERY, electro-chemical and metallurgical engineer, formerly with the Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation, has joined the staff of Arthur D. Little, Inc., research chemists and engineers of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

FRANK A. PATTY, chemist in charge of the Gas Mask

and Respirators Laboratory of the U. S. Bureau of Mines at Pittsburgh, Pa., has become chief chemist for the Fidelity and Casualty Company, of New York, where he will conduct investigations in industrial hygiene.

PROFESSOR JOHN R. BANGS, JR., of Cornell University, has been appointed chairman of the committee on the professional status and employment of engineering graduates of the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education.

DR. J. C. TH. UPHOF, research botanist of Orlando, Fla., has returned from a four month botanical trip which he spent in the Balkan countries, especially in Bulgaria, Turkey and Yugoslavia. He was for a considerable time the guest of the Royal Biological Institute in Sofia, the private institution of King Boris III.

SIR SYDNEY COCKERELL, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, has been appointed as London adviser to the Felton Bequest for the next three years and left for Melbourne on November 7 to consult the trustees. The Felton Bequest to the National Art Gallery of Victoria is the largest single bequest fund in the empire for the purchase of art treasures, having an income of £26,000 (Australian) a year. 'Two years' income is now available for spending. Since it was established under the will of Alfred Felton, £493,750 has been spent upon works of art, books, furniture, glass and porcelain.

THE first of three illustrated lectures sponsored by the Harvard Institute of Geographical Exploration was given on November 12, when Dr. Kirk Bryan, professor of physiography, spoke on "A New Theory of the Last Stages of the Ice Age in Southeastern New England." Bradford Washburn, explorer and assistant in geography, will give the second lecture on December 10, entitled "Over the Roof of the Continent," a lecture concerning his recent Alaska trip. The third lecture will be given on January 14 by Harmer Selvidge, assistant in physics, on "Eclipse Observations and the Kirghiz Borderland." It will give an account of the Harvard-Massachusetts Institute of Technology eclipse expedition to Russia last summer.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY ROLLESTON, who was physician extraordinary to the late King George V, arrived in the United States on November 10. He addressed a group of surgeons and physicians in Washington on November 16 at a dinner celebrating the Army Medical Library Centennial. His subject concerned the debt the world owes to the oldest American medical library through its universal distribution of the cumulative *Index Medicus*. Before leaving for Washington Sir Humphry addressed the historical

seminar of the Yale Medical School. While in New Haven he was the guest of Dr. Harvey Cushing.

DR. RONALD A. FISHER, Galton professor of eugenics at University College, London, delivered two lectures at Yale University on October 27. The first was before the Neurological Study Unit of the Yale University School of Medicine on "Purpose of Design in Experimentation." The second was a Woodward lecture entitled "The Rôle of Genetical Mutations in Evolution." Dr. Fisher lectured at the University of Minnesota on October 19 and a few days earlier at the University of California.

DR. D'ARCY WENTWORTH THOMPSON, professor of natural history at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, is giving a series of six Lowell lectures in Boston on "Growth and Form in Plants."

DR. FLORENCE DE L. LOWTHER, professor of zoology at Barnard College, was the guest of honor at the Barnard College Club on November 5. Dr. Lowther, who recently returned from the Belgian Congo, described her experiences and showed motion pictures taken on the trip.

DR. LINUS PAULING, professor of chemistry at the California Institute of Technology, on November 4 ad-

ressed the University of California at Los Angeles Chapter of the Society of the Sigma Xi on "The Use of Magnetic Methods in Chemistry."

THE two hundred and ninth regular meeting of the American Physical Society will be held in Chicago on Friday and Saturday, November 27 and 28. On Friday evening, November 27, there will be a joint dinner with the Chicago Physics Club held at the International House, on the university campus. At this dinner Dr. K. K. Darrow, of the Bell Telephone Laboratories of New York, will speak on "Spinning Atoms and Spinning Electrons."

A WIRELESS dispatch to *The New York Times*, dated November 14, reports that Dr. Willi Menzel, professor of armament technique in the Berlin Technical Institute at Charlottenburg, has been appointed director of the German Central Association for Scientific Research, to succeed Dr. Johannes Stark, formerly professor at Würzburg. Dr. Menzel has been for two years head of the research department of the National Socialist Ministry of Education. The association controls the funds available for research work in Germany. Dr. Menzel is said to have published recently an article attacking theoretical physics as developed by Dr. Einstein and other distinguished Jewish men of science.

DISCUSSION

ANOTHER NOTE ON SCIENTIFIC WRITING

MR. URBACH deplores the prevalent low standard of scientific exposition.¹ He complains about (a) verbosity, (b) the circumlocutory passive and (c) mixed figures of speech. His examples convince him and me, but they may not convince their authors and the majority of the publishers of research. And, if there is a difference of opinion, who is right? Doubtless he has found that many persons will not accept his editorial dicta and that he often has to validate against dissent his claim that one form is better than another. So what determines *good* and *bad*? Usage? Hardly. It is scientific usage which Mr. Urbach seeks to improve. Plainly we need to find a principle of validation.

We can not have rules. All cases are debatable, and there is no dictator to hand down decisions. What we need is a clear recognition of the purpose of scientific writing, and then perhaps we may hope for agreement on the principle that the best writing is the writing that most nearly fulfils its purpose. The purpose of scientific exposition, surely, is publication, and what

is in the writer's mind becomes public only when many other persons read and understand him. Research, we are told often enough, is not complete until it is published, but we need also to be reminded that the badly written report may find no public because it is too forbidding to be read. Thus it would not be truly published at all. The writer needs to have his public in mind as he writes.

To have his public in mind, to be writing to a definite audience, is a specific mental attitude on the part of the writer, an attitude which, if developed with skill, solves—and here lies my thesis—all the problems which Mr. Urbach raises. There seems to be no good word for this attitude. *Benevolence* and *altruism* are much too pompous, though etymologically exactly right. The absence of *egoism*, the opposite of what the Freudians call *narcissism*, is what I have in mind. The successful expositor thinks about his audience and forgets himself in his eagerness to guide the growth of thought in their minds. That is the goal whose approximation would prevent Mr. Urbach and me from writing notes about scientific writing, and yet how often the researcher thinks he has accomplished his purpose when he puts an idea behind a barrier of confusing verbiage.

¹ W. F. Urbach, *SCIENCE*, 84: 390-391, October 30, 1936.