it can freely promote natural knowledge and fearlessly, without prejudice, select committees qualified to give expert advice and opinions and able to do so disinterestedly. Not very long ago such freedom and independence were taken for granted. But a time has now come when we may well ponder them. By studying the Royal Society as described in its official "Record," much may be learned of the conditions governing the effective organization of men of science and their disinterested service to society.

OBITUARY

CARL L. ALSBERG

THE passing of Carl L. Alsberg on October 31, 1940, represents indeed a loss, not only to the world of science, but even more so to those who had the privilege of knowing and working with him. That his loss will be felt in many different quarters is due, in large part, to the extraordinary breadth of his interests and an all-embracing curiosity which led him into ever newer fields. His life was one of many transitions and to each new task he brought, not only the wealth of great experience, but also a rare originality of thought and quickness of perception.

Born in New York City in 1877, his early education was not along conventional lines but took place entirely at home under the supervision of his mother, a woman of unusual intelligence, and his father, who was a chemist. While still quite young, he entered Columbia University, from which he obtained an A.B. degree at the age of nineteen. His early interest was in biochemistry, probably traceable to the influence of his father, and as training for his chosen field he studied medicine, taking an M.D. degree from Columbia in 1900. Thereafter followed three years of scientific study and research at the Universities of Strassburg and Berlin, and upon his return to the United States he was appointed assistant in physical chemistry at Harvard University. His association with that institution in various capacities lasted until 1908, at which time he entered the service of the Bureau of Plant Industry in the United States Department of Agriculture as chemical biologist. In 1912 he was selected to head the Bureau of Chemistry in the Department of Agriculture and served as bureau chief for nine years, during which time he developed a keen interest in problems of governmental policy and administration.

On the founding of the Food Research Institute at Stanford University in 1921, he accepted appointment as one of the three original directors, his fellow directors being Dr. Alonzo Taylor and Dr. Joseph S. Davis. With his removal to the West Coast, Dr. Alsberg soon became deeply interested in problems of the Pacific area, in particular those of food supply and their effect upon the population of the Far East and North America. The result was his very active participation in the Institute of Pacific Relations, and for years he served, not only as trustee, but also as chairman of the International Research Committee of that body. He was, in addition, a member of the Committee on Pacific Investigations, Division of Foreign Relations, of the National Research Council, and a member of the Pacific Coast Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council.

It was at the Food Research Institute that Dr. Alsberg first took an active interest in economics, an interest stimulated by his close association with others concerned primarily with the economics of food supply. As a result, his energies were given a new direction, to which a lengthy list of publications on various economic phases of the food industry can attest. He was in particular attracted by problems of food production and commodity regulation, and in recent years devoted much time to the study of these questions in relation to wheat and fats and oils.

On the whole, the years at Stanford represented a transition between the natural scientist and the social scientist, and with his appointment in 1938 as director of the Giannini Foundation and professor of agricultural economics at the University of California, this new development was completed. Due to his own experience, Dr. Alsberg was always deeply concerned with the relationship between the physical and the social sciences. His years of service to the former had confirmed his belief in the great worth of the natural sciences, not only *per se,* but as a discipline for the scholar. He was especially fascinated by the problem of adapting the methods of research employed in the natural sciences to research in the social sciences and emphasized the value of scientific methods in his teaching.

To give a list of Dr. Alsberg's publications and the many organizations in which he was active would require much space. Above all, it would give no genuine picture of his truly great contribution to science and to society, for much of this lies hidden in the encouragement and stimulus he has given to others. Never one to be sparing of his help, his suggestions and advice have led to the inauguration and completion of many works of scholarship and research, and even invention, which otherwise might not have seen the light of day. For this he claimed no credit but the satisfaction of seeing a good piece of work well done.

His influence will live long after him in those who knew him.

EDWIN C. VOORHIES

THE GIANNINI FOUNDATION OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

RECENT DEATHS

DR. WILLIAM JULIAN ALBERT BLISS, from 1901 until his retirement in 1928 with the title professor emeritus, collegiate professor of physics at the Johns Hopkins University, died on December 27 in his seventy-fourth year.

ROY BURNETT SMITH, professor emeritus of chemistry at Colgate University, a member of the faculty for 37 years, died on December 25. He was sixty-five years old.

DR. JOHN EARL GUBERLET, professor of zoology and member of the staff of the Oceanographic Laboratories of the University of Washington, died on December 30 in his fifty-fourth year.

DR. WILLIAM BROWNING, emeritus professor of neurology of the Long Island College of Medicine, died on January 5 in his eighty-sixth year.

DR. CLELIA DUEL MOSHER, emeritus professor of hygiene at Stanford University, died on December 22 at the age of seventy-seven years.

HENRI BERGSON, professor of philosophy at the College of France from 1900 to 1921, died on January 4 at the age of eighty-one years.

JACQUES ARSÈNE D'ARSONVAL, professor emeritus of experimental physiology at the Sorbonne, Paris, died on December 31 at the age of eighty-nine years.

Nature reports the death of Professor Emile Argand, professor of geology, mineralogy and paleontology in the University of Neuchâtel, at the age of sixty-two years, and of Dr. Wilhelm Haberling, professor of the history of medicine in the Düsseldorf Academy of Medicine, at the age of seventy years.

PROFESSOR E. O. ESSIG writes: "The date of birth of Professor Charles William Woodworth has been erroneously given as April 8, 1865, in 'American Men of Science,' ed. 6, p. 1575, 1938; 'A History of Entomology,' Macmillan Co., N. Y., p. 800, 1931, and SCIENCE, Vol. 92, p. 570, 1940. The correct date is April 28, 1865."

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF PHARMACOPOEIAL REVISION

DURING the Pharmacopoeial Convention last May, a request was presented for the publication from time to time of research problems, which, if solved, would assist in the work of revision. To comply with this request the chairman of sub-committees have been requested to suggest subjects which in their special fields were particularly important. More detail will be given to any one who is interested in investigating one of the subjects suggested.

The following subjects have been offered:

A method for biological assay of Ergot that measures the content of both Ergotoxine and Ergonovine types of alkaloids.

An efficient and inexpensive method for biological assay of Aconite and its preparations.

Statistical studies of the value of Anti-pneumococcic Serums in general practice.

A suitable standard of assay for Rheum based upon its Anthraquinone content.

The comparative anatomy of the rhizomes and roots of Chinese Rhubarbs yielded by *Rheum officinale, R. palmatum, R. palmatum* var. *tanguticum* and hybrids between these and other Rheum species including *R. Rhaponticum.*

Further studies of the assays of Cantharidies, Ipecac and Capsicum.

Chemical assay of Aconite and Aloe.

The separation of Strychnine and Brucine.

The therapeutic value of reduced iron.

The absorption of pure powdered electrolytic iron from the alimentary tract.

Rapid, accurate method for the determination of the pH of distilled water.

Further study of the limit of unsaturates test in Cyclopropane.

Heavy metals' test for Diluted Hypophosphorous Acid.

The sensitivity of the flame test for sodium in chemicals used as reagents.

Oil of Cassia, tests and constants.

Oil of Nutmeg, detection of Pinene or redistilled Oil of Turpentine.

Oil of Peppermint, tests and constants (distinction between unrectified and rectified).

Stability of Fluidextract of Ergot.

Tincture of Digitalis. A study of the U.S.P. Tincture and a comparison of the tincture made from defatted drug to determine the difference, if any, in activity.

A cytogenetical study of *Rheum officinale, Rheum palmatum* and other Asiatic Rhubarbs.

A cytogenetical study of *Digitalis purpurea.*

TRAINING AT THE NEW YORK UNIVERSITY FOR SQUADRON ENGINEERING OFFICERS FOR THE AIR CORPS

THE College of Engineering of New York University will train fifty men every three months as Air Corps squadron engineering officers, beginning on