

bama Academy would sponsor a meeting of southern scientists in 1941. Therefore, plans have been made for a meeting of those who wish to attend from a large Southern area. No very definite geographic limits have been set, the idea being to welcome any interested southern scientists. Representative attendance from several states is already assured.

In *SCIENCE*, July 5, 1940, there appeared an unusually cogent article entitled "Scientific Research the Hope of the South," by Professor George D. Palmer, of the University of Alabama. This article was doubtless caused partly by preceding discussions. It certainly has been the cause of much subsequent discussion and planning. Persons who have not read that article will enjoy doing so, and many will think of additions that they would like to make upon that topic. Helping in the plans for the meetings in Mobile on March 20 and 21 are many individuals, industrial and educational institutions, and such successful scientific bodies as the Southern Biologists Association, the Southeastern Branch of the American Meteorological Society and others. The Alabama Academy of Science is acting as planning host.

The major immediate purpose of the Mobile meeting is to consider the desirability of organizing a Southern or Southeastern Scientific Society. There will be a program of scientific papers. There will be abundant provision for discussion of scientific discoveries, needs and opportunities. There will be a dinner of southern scientists on Thursday evening, the twentieth, and a dinner of the Alabama Academy on Friday evening, the twenty-first. Those desiring to participate in the meetings, or to make dinner reservations, should write to Professor George D. Palmer, University, Alabama.

Perhaps it should be stated that the proposed Southern Scientific Society would not necessarily be affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The General Secretary of the association is a delegate to the Mobile meeting for the purpose of cooperating in any service for science and citizens.

OTIS W. CALDWELL

*General Secretary of the American
Association for the Advancement of Science*

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS

SCIENTIFIC men who are included in the list of New Year honors conferred by King George are: *Baronet*, Dr. Hugh Lett, president of the Royal College of Surgeons of England; *Knight Commander of the Bath*, Dr. Edward Victor Appleton, secretary of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, previously Jacksonian professor of natural philosophy at the University of Cambridge; *Knight Bachelor*, Dr. William Lawrence Bragg, Cavendish professor of experimental physics at the University of Cambridge, who will be known as Sir Lawrence Bragg, and Dr. John Sealy Edward Townsend, Wykeham professor of physics at the University of Oxford; *Companion of St. Michael and St. George*, Dr. Robert Thomson Leiper, professor of helminthology at the University of London.

THE honorary degree of doctor of science has been granted by the National University of Ireland to Dr. Gordon M. Holmes and Dr. F. M. R. Walshe, consulting neurologists in London, "in view of their distinction as neurologists, and in recognition of their valuable contributions to medical literature," and to Professor Ernest William Hay Groves, professor emeritus of surgery at the University of Bristol, "in view of his eminence as an orthopedic surgeon, and an internationally recognized authority on the literature of his subject." Dr. Walshe was visiting neurologist at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1925.

For "outstanding work in physics" Professor A. F.

Joffe, member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., has been awarded the Order of Lenin, the highest honor of the Soviet Union. The award was made on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, in recognition of work on the mechanical and electrical properties of crystals, on the photoelectric effect, on the magnetic field of projectiles and on the manufacture of plastic synthetic rubber.

THE Civic Achievement Medal of the Municipal Museum Commission of Rochester, N. Y., was presented on February 19 at the annual convocation of the commission to Frank William Lovejoy, president of the Eastman Kodak Company. The first medal was awarded in 1938 to Dr. Herman Le Roy Fairchild, professor emeritus of geology at the University of Rochester, who celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday on April 29 of that year.

DUE to the illness of Dr. Alexander Silverman, head of the department of chemistry of the University of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Section of the American Chemical Society has postponed the presentation of the Pittsburgh Award for 1940 from February 20 to March 20. It will be presented to Dr. Silverman at a dinner at the University Club in Pittsburgh preceding the March meeting of the section. Dr. William Lloyd Evans, head of the department of chemistry at the Ohio State University and president of the American Chemical Society, will attend the dinner and will address the section that evening.

DR. ERNST MAYR, associate curator of the Whitney-Rothschild Collection of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and Dr. Edgar Anderson, professor of botany at Washington University, St. Louis, and geneticist of the Missouri Botanical Garden, have been named Jesup lecturers in the department of zoology at Columbia University. These lectures were endowed in 1905 by the late Morris K. Jesup, president of the American Museum of Natural History and of the New York Chamber of Commerce, "to present in popular form the results of recent scientific discoveries." "Speciation and Evolution" will be the subject of this year's lectures. They will be given on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week from March 4 to March 27 in Schermerhorn Hall, Columbia University.

WALTER S. WEEKS, professor of mining at the University of California, has been elected president of the San Francisco section of the American Institution of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers.

FRED A. MENNERICH, of the Textile Laboratory of Jersey City, N. J., has been elected president of the New York Microscopical Society.

DR. DIRK BROUWER, associate professor of astronomy at Yale University, has been promoted to a full professorship and has been appointed director of the observatory in succession to Dr. Frank Schlesinger, who will retire in June.

DR. FRANCIS G. BLAKE, Sterling professor of medicine, acting dean of the School of Medicine of Yale University, has been made dean. Dr. William T. Salter, of the Thorndike Memorial Laboratory at the Boston City Hospital, has been appointed professor of pharmacology.

DR. JOHN A. TIMM, assistant professor of chemistry at Yale University, has been appointed professor of chemistry, director of the School of General Science and chairman of the division of science at Simmons College. He will succeed Dr. Kenneth L. Mark, who will retire at the close of the academic year.

DR. REED C. ROLLINS, for the past three years a member of the Society of Fellows of Harvard University, took up his work as instructor in biology (botany) and curator of the Dudley Herbarium at Stanford University on January 2. Dr. Rollins has taken over part of the instruction and herbarium work of Professor Ira L. Wiggins, who became director of the Natural History Museum last September, following the retirement with the rank of emeritus professor of biology (botany) of Professor LeRoy Abrams.

DR. WESLEY C. MITCHELL, professor of economics at Columbia University, president in 1938 of the American Association for the Advancement of Science,

has leave of absence from the university for the coming academic year. Dr. Douglas Johnson, professor of physiography, has leave of absence for the spring semester.

DR. T. L. ALTHAUSEN, associate professor of medicine at the Medical School of the University of California, San Francisco, will give a course this summer on "Fundamentals of Health and Disease at the University of Hawaii."

DR. MAZYCK P. RAVENEL, professor emeritus of preventive medicine and bacteriology of the School of Medicine of the University of Missouri, editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of Public Health*, has become editor emeritus. He is succeeded by Dr. Harry Stoll Mustard, director of the DeLamar Institute of Public Health of Columbia University.

DR. GERRIT S. MILLER, JR., for thirty-one years curator of mammals in the United States National Museum, retired on January 13, after serving the museum for forty-two years. Dr. Miller is continuing his work as an associate in biology.

DR. CLARENCE A. SKINNER has retired as chief of the division of optics of the National Bureau of Standards and has been succeeded by Dr. Frederick Bates, who has been connected with the bureau since 1903. Dr. J. Franklin Meyer, because of ill health, has resigned as chief of the section of photometry. Dr. J. H. Dellinger, chief of the radio section of the bureau, has been made chairman of the recently revived Radio Technical Committee for aeronautics in the Department of Commerce.

DR. HERBERT T. KELLY has been appointed chairman of the Committee on Nutrition of the Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania. This is a newly formed committee. Its plans include the dissemination of the newer knowledge of nutrition, and the causes, prevention, early recognition and medical management of nutritional deficiency.

DR. L. B. DUNNING has been elected chairman of the New York Bureau of Dental Information.

DR. ARTHUR B. CLEAVES, formerly of the Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey, has resigned his position as geologist for the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to become chief geologist for Caribbean Architect-Engineer. He will be engaged in geologic work connected with the new U. S. military bases to be established in the British West Indies.

DR. JUSTUS MUELLER, of the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University, has been elected a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Parasitology*, the official publication of the American Society of Parasitologists.

FRANK C. FLETCHER has been made head of the department of entomology of Ward's Natural Science Establishment, Rochester, N. Y.

DR. DETLEV W. BRONK, professor of physiology and chairman of the department of physiology and biophysics at the Cornell University Medical College, New York City, will deliver the fifteenth annual series of Priestley Lectures at the Pennsylvania State College, from March 2 to 11. The lectures, a series of five, will commemorate the two hundred and eighth anniversary of the birth of Joseph Priestley.

DR. OTTO LOEWI, research professor of pharmacology at the New York University College of Medicine, delivered the Dohme Lectures 1940-1941 at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine on January 21 and 22. He spoke on "Humoral Transmission of Nervous Impulse."

PROFESSOR WALTER F. LOEWING, professor of botany and head of the department at the State University of Iowa, on February 13 gave an illustrated lecture at the University of Illinois under the auspices of the Division of Biological Sciences. His subject was: "The Developmental History of Plants—Appraisal of Recent Advances."

DR. H. E. EDGERTON, associate professor of electrical measurements at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spoke at the February meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on "Stroboscopic Light and its Applications," and Dr. Dard Hunter, curator of the Dard Hunter Paper Museum of the institute, presented an exhibit on "An Experiment in Fifteenth Century Type Making."

DR. A. O. C. NIER, professor of physics at the University of Minnesota, gave on February 11 and 12 two lectures at the Iowa State College. They related to the measurement of relative abundances and separation of isotopes, and to the use of isotopes as tracers in chemical and biochemical problems.

THE International Association for Dental Research will hold its annual general session at the Jefferson Hotel in St. Louis on March 14 and 16. The American Association of Dental Schools will meet at the same place from March 17 to 19, inclusive.

THE annual meeting of the Electrochemical Society will be held in Cleveland from April 16 to 19. Headquarters will be at the Hotel Cleveland. At the meeting of the Board of Directors held in conjunction with the Ottawa Convention it was unanimously decided to establish a new type of membership in the society, namely, "Sustaining Membership." Dues for this type of membership are \$100 for one year or \$500 for five years. Up to the beginning of the present month twenty-two individuals and corporations had responded.

A SECOND Midwest Conference on Spectrographic Analysis will be held in the Kent Chemical Laboratory at the University of Chicago on Saturday, March 29. Because of the growing importance of absorption spectroscopy, this year's conference will be held in two divisions, one dealing with emission spectra, the other with absorption spectra. The former is being organized by W. C. Pierce, of the University of Chicago, and the latter by Elmer Miller, of the University of Minnesota. Further information and copies of the final program may be obtained from either of these.

THE twenty-fourth annual meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists will be held at the University of Florida from April 3 to 5. All sessions will be held in the Chemistry Auditorium. The annual dinner will be given at the White House Hotel, Gainesville, the headquarters, on Thursday, April 3, and an out-of-door supper is planned for the evening of April 4. Excursions to various points of interest have been arranged. There will be a meeting of the Board of Governors on Wednesday evening, April 2. The titles of papers to be presented at the meeting must be in the hands of the secretary of the local committee before March 1. Accommodations in other hotels and in private homes are also available. Reservations may be made by writing to the White House Hotel, Gainesville, or to the secretary of the Local Committee, C. J. Goin, Department of Biology of the University of Florida.

IN addition to the examinations already reported in SCIENCE, the U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C., announces examinations for the positions of senior pharmacologist, with a salary of \$4,600 a year; of pharmacologist, \$3,800; of associate pharmacologist, \$3,200, and of assistant pharmacologist, \$2,600. Applications will be rated as received by the commission during 1941, and certification will be made as the needs of the service require, except that if sufficient eligibles are obtained applications may be closed, in which case due notice will be given. An examination is also announced to fill positions as chemical analyst. The salary of senior chemical analyst is \$2,000 a year, and that of assistant chemical analyst, \$1,620. Applicants are desired who are skilled in the standard methods of analysis used in commercial laboratories. Applications must be on file not later than March 13. Applications must be filed not later than March 10 for the position of radio inspector in the Federal Communications Commission at \$2,600 a year, and assistant radio inspector in various departments at \$2,000. The work of these positions involves radio inspection work of all kinds. These salaries are subject to a 3½ per cent. retirement deduction. Further information and application forms may be obtained from the secretary of the Board of U. S. Civil Service

Examiners at any first- or second-class post office, or from the U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C.

THE Central Scientific Company, Chicago, invites applications in chemistry or mathematics or both, for the Cenco Industrial Fellowships, with stipends of \$1,200. Two fellows, and possibly three, will be selected from the applicants. Preliminary selection will

be made on the basis of replies to questionnaires, scholastic standing and recommendations. The final selection will be made by examination and interview. Fellows will be under the supervision of the director of research and development, but will be given experience in other departments of the company. Application blanks may be secured on request from Dr. M. N. States, Central Scientific Company, 1700 Irving Park Road, Chicago, Ill.

DISCUSSION

NOTE ON AN ERRONEOUS STATEMENT CONCERNING PRE-NOVA STARS

IN reading a recent popular book the writer encountered a surprising statement which is indicative of the wide-spread misinformation about the pre-outburst condition of novae. Taken by itself the statement may seem very trivial, but its implications are so far-reaching that it can not be allowed to pass. It has happened too often in the history of science that an eminent authority has given misinformation which, because of the weight carried by the author's name, has been passed on from one text to another for decades. The repetition of such occurrences can be avoided only if those who notice them take it upon themselves to expose the errors mercilessly, instead of tolerantly passing them by as just a few incorrect statements among thousands of correct ones.

The offending paragraph occurs in "The Birth and Death of the Sun," by Professor George Gamow. In regard to the pre-nova state he writes on page 182:

Only in the case of Nova Herculis, which flashed on the northern sky in mid-December, 1934, had the spectrum been photographed occasionally before the explosion. And the spectrogram reveals that before the explosion this star was not much different from any other star of the main sequence. In fact, its absolute luminosity and its spectral characteristics were very close to those of our Sun. Does this mean that our Sun is also destined to burst in a not very distant future?

There are two errors here. In the first place, the lone nova whose spectrum was observed before outburst was not Nova Herculis, but Nova Aquilae 1918. Secondly, the faint spectrum observed was *definitely not* of solar type. According to Miss Cannon,¹ it could not be classified, but was surely of "early" type, since the energy distribution of the continuous spectrum resembled that of class B or A.

On the correctness or incorrectness of statements concerning the pre-nova condition of stars hinges the important question of the cause of the nova outburst,

as well as one of great popular interest, *viz.*, whether the sun will some day become a nova. The remark that the pre-nova star "was not much different from any other star of the main sequence" definitely conveys to the reader the idea that normal well-behaved stars become novae. This is a rash generalization to make, and indeed there are good observational grounds for believing that such a view is incorrect.

It is worth while to seek out the origin of the errors made by Professor Gamow. The misidentification of the nova was probably just a confusion which arose in remembering a large number of facts, and it is the less important of the two errors. The incorrect statement concerning the spectrum is pretty surely to be traced to a number of conjectural statements which were published concerning Nova Herculis. Thus, Grottrian² refers to it as a dwarf star of about class K 5. But this is merely an adoption of a similar statement made by Beileke and Hachenberg.³ And these authors in turn quote Guthnick⁴ as authority for their statement. Just which of these sources gave Professor Gamow his "facts" is not important. The thing that is of importance, in the writer's opinion, is that a *conjecture or pure assumption has been passed on as if it were an established fact*. May we now expect that for years to come, Gamow will be quoted as authority for the statement that stars in the pre-nova state have characteristics practically identical with those of the sun? I hope not!

The full discussion of this question of the nature of the pre-nova star will be published elsewhere. There are good reasons for adopting as a working hypothesis⁵ the idea that the pre-nova stars are practically identical with the post-nova objects: sub-dwarfs of visual absolute magnitude +4, bolometric absolute magnitude 0, temperature 40,000 to 50,000°K, radii of order 0.1 ☉ to 0.2 ☉, and densities of order 200 ☉. They are

² *Zeitschrift für Astrophysik*, 13: 217, 1937.

³ *Zeitschrift für Astrophysik*, 10: 372, 1935.

⁴ *Naturwiss.*, 23: 249, 1935.

⁵ Cf. Biermann, *Zeitschrift für Astrophysik*, 18: 344, 1939.

¹ *Harvard Annals*, 81: 179, 1920.