

in 1933 Hope professor of zoology at the University of Oxford, died on November 21 at the age of eighty-seven years.

ACCORDING to a Reuter message from New Delhi, Sir Aurel Stein, the Asiatic explorer, died on October 26 at the age of eighty-one years.

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

BRITISH VITAL STATISTICS

IN the foreword to the Summary Report of his department for the year ended March 31, Ernest Brown, British Minister of Health, states that in many ways the year was a notable one, remarkable, among other things, for a series of favorable records in vital statistics, and for an increase at the same time in short-term sickness. He writes:

There can be no doubt that the nation's prodigious war effort has imposed a severe strain upon the health of the people—a strain which they have in general withstood with dogged determination and astonishing success. So far as we can, we have made ready to meet any attack that disease may make. . . . But, as has often been emphasized, the strains of war are progressive, and their effects on health may be long-term. Certainly in the fifth winter of war, we must not relax our watchfulness or reduce our activity.

The report, according to *The Times*, London, states that the year was a record-breaking one in vital statistics, apart from the black spots in venereal disease and tuberculosis. Maternal and infant mortality rates and the standardized death rates among civilians, male and female, were the lowest ever recorded in England and Wales, and the incidence of infectious diseases was remarkably low, probably the best on record. Inquiries among doctors and rising claims to sickness benefit under the national health insurance scheme suggested a considerable increase in short-term sickness, but an increase in minor ailments might well be expected after more than three years of war.

Deaths in England and Wales in 1942, including registered non-civilian deaths and those due to enemy action, numbered 480,137, or 55,043 less than in 1941, the general death-rate among civilians being remarkably low. Among females the standardized rate was 6.84 per 1,000 living, or 8 per cent. better than in any previous year, notwithstanding the inclusion of deaths in this country from enemy action and the withdrawal of large numbers of healthy young women from the civilian population. Among civilian males the standardized rate of 9.52 was also the lowest recorded, in spite of the considerable effect of selective recruitment. Mortality of children at the pre-school ages of one to five, which had declined by no less than 47 per cent. between 1931–35 and 1939, showed a further improvement of two per cent. in 1942; and at the school ages of five to 15 the low level reached in 1939 was regained.

Live births, 654,039, increased by 66,811, and, after

allowing for deaths, there was a natural increase of 173,902, the rate of 15.8 per 1,000 being the highest since 1931.

The report points out that the number of houses repaired up to March 31 was 2,500,000, and well over 1,000,000 had received more extensive repairs. The housing position, however, is serious, and "a vast amount of work is required to bring housing conditions up even to the standard of 1939, a standard by no means as high as that aimed at before the war broke out."

THE HOOKER SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY

A BRANCH of the Hooker Scientific Library was opened on November 1, 1942, at Wayne University, Detroit, by Dr. Neil E. Gordon, chairman of the department of chemistry. The object of this branch is to help the library to continue the service which was started at Central College in October, 1939. The demand for translations, searches, abstracting and photocopying became so large that a plan was formulated to develop in Detroit a complete modern chemical library. The sum of \$200,000 has been raised by subscription from foundations, chemical industries and individuals, \$100,000 to be used for the purchase of the library and \$100,000 for modernizing and adding to it.

Contributions are conditional upon the acceptance of the following responsibilities by Wayne University—maintenance and development of the collection; a staff sufficient to make the library useful to chemists; space for housing and service; and maintenance of a chemical technology service covering translations in fifteen languages, searches, consultation and photo-reproduction.

Dr. Gordon announces that the acquisition of the library for Wayne University has been assured by a grant of \$100,000 toward its purchase by the Kresge Foundation. The other \$100,000 is being contributed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the local section of the American Chemical Society, the Barnes, Gibson and Raymond, Burroughs Adding Machine Company, the Chrysler Corporation, Carboly Company, Inc., Difeo Laboratories, Inc., the Detroit Edison Company, the Ethyl Corporation, Eberbach and Company, the Federal Mogul Corporation, the Gelatin Products Company, the General Motors Corporation, the Hercules Powder Company, Mrs. Icie Macy Hoobler, Dr. and Mrs. Sibley Hoobler, the McLouth Steel Corporation, the Miner Estate,