

SCIENCE NOTES AND NEWS

Reorganisation of Medical Libraries in India

Dr. D. V. Subba Reddy, Officer on special duty, Madras Medical College, writes:—

There are a number of valuable old medical books, printed in various countries of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, lying unknown and unutilised in India and gradually disappearing or disintegrating.

The Government of India have recently approved of a scheme to search for salvage and examine the old medical books in various libraries in India with a view to prepare a special catalogue of these valuable books. Circulars have been sent to all the Medical Colleges and other Medical Institutions in India, requesting lists of such old books for detailed examination. Some of the books will have to be photographed to show the title pages or illustrations. An analysis of the contents and the importance of the books as well as biographical notes of the author will have to be added.

Special attention has to be given to old medical books, dealing with the health problems and diseases of India and neighbouring countries, and also to those books written by various medical men serving in India, either as East India Company's doctors or as surgeons attached to Native States or private Missions.

Some of these books have been printed in India and may not be available easily in Western countries and libraries. Their existence or contents are unknown to European and American teachers and writers on Medicine. Even in India all the books printed in India on diseases of India in the 18th and 19th centuries, are generally unknown to the Indian medical profession. When somebody knows about the existence of an old medical book, it is not available in certain parts of India. There is no list of such old books and whether they are available in India and if so where.

May I request your readers to pass on any information they have, regarding the existence of old medical books, particularly those printed in India or manuscripts, in any private collection or in the private libraries of the medical practitioners of the last century. Many of the private libraries of the Native States zamindars, educated and cultured families, missionary establishments, various printing presses and publishing houses, may have a few valuable old medical books, which may not be available in the public or medical college libraries. All lists of such books or the addresses of persons where such books are available or even the books themselves may be sent to me.

Dr. J. N. Mukherjee

Dr. J. N. Mukherjee, Director, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, has been invited by the Organising Committee of the

Fourth International Congress of Soil Science (Amsterdam) 1950 to become one of the Vice-Presidents of the Congress.

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has called a United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilisation of Resources to be held in the United States in May or June 1949. Dr. Mukherjee has been invited to prepare a paper on Tropical Climates for presentation before the sectional meeting on "Improving soil productivity".

Cellulose-bearing Materials other than Cotton for Rayon Manufacture

Investigations conducted at the Technological Laboratories of the Indian Central Cotton Committee show that certain species of bamboo, reeds, bagasse, jute fibres, etc., can yield pulps suitable for rayon industry by employing modifications in the normal treatment. The pulps obtained after processing these raw materials under optimum conditions of kier boiling and bleaching have been evaluated and it is found that they compare favourably with the imported pulps for rayon manufacture.

Oil from Kamala Seed

The chemical examination of the seeds of the Kamala plant *Mallotus philippinensis* (which is noted for its dye imparting a beautiful, deep bright, durable orange colour to silk), made at the Chemical Laboratories of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Delhi, shows that the oil is yellowish brown in colour and polymerises to a rubbery mass in about a fortnight. With lead linoleate as an additive, the oil gives rapidly drying film as in the case of tung oil.

Wood Corrosion and Hot Chemicals

The effect of hot chemicals on Cypress both in the natural state and after various protective treatments, is described in the Indian Forest Leaflet No. 101, which has just been published. The treatments studied showed varying degrees of protection, phenol formaldehyde generally being the best. Cypress was found to be resistant to hot sulphuric acid upto 10% even when unprotected.

Dr. Frans Verdoorn

Dr. Frans Verdoorn, Managing Editor of *Chronica Botanica*, has been elected a Corresponding Member of the International Academy for the History of Science in Paris and Chairman of the newly established International Phytohistorical Committee of the International Union of Biological Sciences.