

# The Advertiser

## March 28<sup>th</sup> 1914.

### BRITISH SCIENTISTS.

#### APPROACHING AUSTRALIAN VISIT. GREAT ENTHUSIASM.

A good deal of interest has been awakened both in the United Kingdom and in Australia in the approaching visit of members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which body is going to hold its annual meetings in Australia this year. Dr. A. C. D. Rivett, the organising secretary, who has returned from a visit he has paid to Great Britain in connection with the enterprise, is at present in Adelaide, and in the course of a chat with a representative of "The Advertiser" on Friday he gave some particulars respecting the forthcoming visit of the party.

He mentioned that he had just returned from England, where he had spent some months in making arrangements at the headquarters of the association and consulting with the local officers at the various centres on matters connected with the projected tour of members to Australia. A good deal of detail work had to be attended to, and he had been much impressed with the amount of interest which had been created in Great Britain in the matter. There had been 450 applications for inclusion in the party. It was felt that this number was too large, and that it would be difficult to handle so many. The number had accordingly been reduced to 370, and further reductions would probably be made. It was surprising that so many persons interested in the advance of science could spare the time to make the trip to Australia, but it spoke well for the thoroughgoing interest which was now being taken in the old land in Australia and Australian affairs.

#### Distinguished Scientists.

Dr. Rivett said, in reply to a question, that it would be invidious to mention individual names, but in the list of visiting members were many of the most eminent scientific men and distinguished university professors of the British Isles. A complete list of the names would be made available in a few days, and when it was published he thought there would be general gratification that such a brilliant party of visitors would be in Australia at one time.

#### Movements of the Party.

A small band of about 70 would spend a week in Western Australia from July 28 to August 4. They would join a larger contingent which expected to reach Adelaide on August 8 by the Aberdeen liner Euripides. The Orient Company's steamer would probably convey a good many of the party, while some would come via America. It had been arranged that the visitors should remain in Adelaide till August 12, and a full programme was being prepared for the filling in of the time. In addition to receptions and other social functions the association would meet officially on three main occasions. The first of these would be when the address of the retiring president (Sir Oliver Lodge) was delivered.

#### Scientific Sections.

The association would be divided into twelve sections for the purpose of its distinctly scientific work. This indicated how the organisation had developed, as at its first meeting in York in 1831 it met as a single body. Since then, however, the day of specialisation had appeared. The physicist of the present time, for instance, would seldom feel comfortable in listening to a technical discussion on rust in wheat, nor would the botanist be likely to be particularly interested in an address on geodetic triangulation. It was found beneficial to divide the work of such an organisation as the British Association for the Advancement of Science into sections dealing with the various branches of knowledge and research in which members were particularly interested. The twelve sections which would hold meetings in Australia would be:—

Section A, which would deal with physical and mathematical science, and would include astronomy and meteorology.

- Section B—Chemistry.
- Section C—Geology.
- Section D—Zoology.
- Section E—Geography.
- Section F—Economics.
- Section G—Engineering.
- Section H—Anthropology.
- Section I—Physiology.
- Section K—Botany.
- Section L—Educational science.
- Section M—Agricultural science.

#### Some Adelaide Addresses.

Dr. Rivett went on to explain that each section would have a president, who would be responsible, amongst other things, for the inauguration of the work of the section, and would give an address to his section on the present position of the particular branch of science represented by that body. These sections would not all meet in Adelaide, but two principal addresses were to be given, one on geography and the other on agriculture. "The former," said the doctor, "is particularly happy, for two reasons. In the first place it may be regarded as a compliment to Sir Charles Lucas, formerly head of the Dominions Department in the Colonial Office, who first suggested the possibility of holding an Australian conference, and who consequently should be the first member of the association to be publicly heard in the Commonwealth in an official scientific address at the first centre in which the association holds its meetings. The second reason is that it is appropriate that this compliment should be paid to Adelaide because of the conspicuous contribution made to geographical knowledge by Dr. Mawson, who unfortunately will not be able to be present on the occasion of Sir Charles Lucas' address."

#### Dr. Mawson's Expedition.

Dr. Rivett is of opinion that Dr. Mawson is acting in a decidedly generous spirit in postponing his first public statement on the scientific results of his expedition until the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Australia. "The statement will make the meeting a notable one," he said, "and will give to its scientific work a marked Australian character. His was an Australian expedition, and I cannot fail to appreciate Dr. Mawson's generous conduct in the sacrifice he is making in postponing the announcement of the results. Naturally we wish that so important a contribution could have been made in Adelaide in these special circumstances. But Dr. Mawson's time in England is so limited in any event that it would be a false kindness to urge him to cut it still shorter, so as to be able to be here during the first week in August. The fortnight he will gain by delaying his statement till the Sydney gathering will be of great importance to him, though the necessity for this step being taken will be a misfortune for Adelaide. Still we may hope that Sir Charles Lucas will in his address make appreciative allusions to what Dr. W. S. Bruce, the leader of the famous Scottish National Antarctic Expedition of 1902-4, in speaking to me said 'is the most valuable piece of work ever carried out in Antarctica.' He was, of course, speaking of the work done by the Mawson expedition."

#### Some Addresses.

"That the address on agriculture should be given in Adelaide seems to be most opportune. It will be given by Mr. A. B. Hall, M.A., F.R.S., who until recently was director of the Rothamsted Experimental Station, and now a commissioner under the Development Act. Such a paper should come at an early stage of the meetings, for it will unquestionably arouse much interest, and it cannot fail to be useful to a large section of the people of Australia. In addition to this a lecturer has been placed at the disposal of the Workers' Educational Association." Professor E. G. K. Gonner, professor of economic science at the Liverpool University, is to be president of the economic section, and will deliver an address.

#### Finance and Work.

Dr. Rivett said he wanted to point out that all the money received in subscriptions was devoted to the promotion of scientific research. He did not doubt that the association would take up some Australian problems, and would organise and support work connected with them. No money paid as subscriptions was ever expended in the annual meetings. The expense of these was borne locally. Probably no better value was ever given for money than that which the British Association for the Advancement of Science returned for its subscriptions in the shape of results of scientific research connected with national problems. But to enable this to be done a large membership was necessary, and while the association had a big fixed membership list it relied to a considerable extent on securing a high local membership for the year of any particular meetings. When the meetings were held in England they usually found that from 600 to 2,500 persons joined locally. No technical qualifications were required. For the Adelaide meetings special terms had been arranged, and persons would be admitted to full membership on payment of £1, and associates would be required to subscribe only

10/. Members were allowed certain special privileges over associates, the most important of which was that they were supplied free of cost with the large annual reports, which contained a complete record of the meetings, including all scientific papers read and addresses given.

Professors Stirling and Kerr Grant are to be in full charge of the local arrangements, while Mr. Thomas Gill, I.S.O., will act as treasurer. Amongst the vice-presidents it is expected that the Governor, the Premier, the Mayor of Adelaide, and the Chancellor of the Adelaide University will be included.

Dr. Rivett said the general arrangements were progressing rapidly, and the Government were giving generous support. A handbook was to be issued containing articles by experts, which ought to prove a splendid advertisement to the State. It was being prepared by the Hon. D. J. Gordon and Mr. V. H. Ryan. The Government were granting certain railway facilities.

#### Entertaining the Visitors.

Dr. Rivett expressed surprise that the visit had proved so popular amongst scientific people in England. It had to be borne in mind that only 150 of the members were receiving any assistance towards their overseas expenses, 225 of the party paying their own ocean travelling bills. He hoped that the Government would see their way to offer the hospitality of the railways to the whole party without distinction. In South Africa that was done in 1905 for a party of 380. The matter would be considered at the forthcoming Premiers' Conference. It had not been found possible to provide private hospitality for the whole party in the different capitals, but it was not necessary to do so. He hoped, however, that 300 could be provided for in this way. A committee had been energetically at work in Adelaide in the matter, which was in the best possible hands—those of his Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor (Sir Samuel Way). Mr. Angus Parsons, M.P., and a sub-committee were dealing with the arrangements for excursions. As it was proposed to give the visitors an opportunity of seeing the country this work was of very great importance. A trip to Broken Hill and Port Pirie had been made possible for a number of experts in geology, mining, and chemistry by the generosity of Mr. G. D. Delprat and the Broken Hill Mine Managers' Association.