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Editorial comment

Elsewhere in this issue readers will see the announcement of the Third Symposium on the Chemistry of Cement which is to be held in London from 15th-20th September this year. Such an event is of little less importance to those concerned with concrete than to those directly engaged in cement manufacture and research.

This meeting of many of the leading authorities on cement is by no means the first of its kind. To find that we have to go back to the early 1880's when the German Professor Bauschinger called for international congresses on the testing of materials. The first of these congresses dealt with cement and was held in Munich in 1884. In the next ten years international meetings were held at Dresden, Berlin and Vienna in which cement received a great deal of attention. At the international congress on cement in Zurich in 1895, the hitherto somewhat nebulous structure of the congresses was reorganized into a more stable body and was re-named the International Association for Testing Materials, with headquarters in Zurich. This Association held its first Congress in Stockholm in

1897. At the beginning of the new century a second congress was held in Budapest and among the impressive list of contributors are found the names of le Chatelier, Blount and Feret. Further meetings were held at roughly three yearly intervals up to the first World War, when the organization broke up. It was re-formed in 1927 and held meetings in Amsterdam, Zurich and London before the second World War once more destroyed the Association.

In London in 1919 the Faraday Society held a meeting, quite independently of the International Association, devoted to "The setting of cements and plasters." This has since been referred to as the first international symposium on the chemistry of cement.

Shortly before the late war a second symposium on the chemistry of cements was organized in Stockholm. This symposium was such a success that as soon as the war ended arrangements were put in hand for another to be held in the United States. Because of the currency difficulties which all European delegates would have encountered this symposium was postponed and it has now been replaced by the meeting in London this September which is sponsored jointly by the Building Research Station of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Cement and Concrete Association under the Presidency of Sir Ben Lockspeiser, Secretary of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, with Sir Francis Meynell, Director of the Cement and Concrete Association, as Vice President.

This year's Symposium, which will last six days, will be divided into sessions dealing with the constitution of Portland cement, the setting and hardening of Portland cement, special cements and the applications of research to the manufacture and utilization of cements. In addition there will be visits to research establishments and a cement works.

The lists of the papers presented at meetings through the years from the end of the last century down to the last meeting in Stockholm in 1939 might very well be

taken as a guide to the amount by which the knowledge of the chemistry of cement has increased and the extent to which modern developments in other fields have been used to accelerate this growth of knowledge. It is greatly to be hoped that this year's Symposium will be as worth while as those in the past at some of which original and important papers were presented in advance of their time. At the Fifth International Congress of the International Association for Testing Materials in 1909, for instance, Professor Zielinsky of Budapest gave

a paper in the conclusion of which he said " apart from the quality of cements, the strength obtainable with them (i.e. mortars and pastes) is, in the first place and to the greatest extent influenced by the quantity of water in the working up process " and " the strength attainable with concrete, so long as the gravel used for the latter is stronger than the mortar, is always nearly equal to the strength of the mortar used for it." But it was not until 1918 that Professor Duff Abrams published his well-known and oft-quoted " Design of concrete mixes."