GLACIOLOGY IN THE INTERNATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL YEAR

THE world-wide programme of observations to be maintained during 1957–8, covering all the branches of geophysical enquiry, is now broadly agreed. Many nations will participate, either through their existing national observatories, or through others to be temporarily set up. Many of the stations to be occupied lie in remote areas, notably in the polar regions and also in high mountains in countries such as Switzerland and India. Studies of the variation of solar radiation and its relation to the behaviour of the atmosphere at high altitudes have an obvious significance. Glaciological investigations likewise form one of several interrelated branches of geophysics and, apart from the polar regions, will be carried out by a number of nations having access to glaciers in temperate and tropical latitudes.

British participation will involve the setting up of Antarctic and sub-Antarctic stations. In high Antarctic latitudes at the head of the Weddell Sea it is proposed to carry out a programme of accumulation and ablation measurements, together with investigations of past variations in the annual accumulation and of the physical behaviour of the ice, as far as the meteorological programme will allow, the personnel being limited in number. At the same time the Trans-antarctic Expedition under Dr. V. E. Fuchs will be carrying out related observations in the same virtually unknown region of Antarctica.

The many active sub-Antarctic glaciers of South Georgia, lying in a region in which climatic variability is of importance, are likely to be the subject of further investigation, together with those of the Antarctic margin along the coasts of Graham Land. There the existing network of meteorological stations set up by the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey provides a useful series of bases for further work.

Elsewhere, the British National Committee is actively considering the establishment of a suitable observational programme on the high equatorial glaciers of East Africa. The period of the "Year" (July 1957 to December 1958) is likely to give rise to numerous contributions to our knowledge of the factors governing the variations of the world's stock of ice.

GLACIERIZED AREAS IN THE SWISS ALPS

A CORRECTION

A communication has been received from Professor P.-L. Mercanton explaining that, through an unfortunate combination of circumstances, an important item was omitted from his calculation of the areas of the Swiss glaciers. This would make his figure 1520 km.^{2} instead of 1384 km.^{2} as stated in his note in this Journal, Vol. 2, No. 15, p. 315–16.

On the other hand the Service Fédéral des Eaux has recently obtained a value of 1556 km.^{2}. This estimate (36 km.^{2} more than the amended figure of Professor Mercanton with the assistance of the map of the Service Topographique Fédéral) was based on surveys in parts of about 300 areas, whereas Professor Mercanton's estimate was based on some 600.

Professor Mercanton is inclined to adopt a mean value of 1545 km.^{2}. Greater precision in so difficult an assessment seems of doubtful value and it is more convenient to adopt a single value for glaciological and geographical purposes.