

NEWS AND VIEWS

The Manchester School of Pure Mathematics

THE Council of the London Mathematical Society has awarded the De Morgan Medal for 1941 to Prof. L. J. Mordell, professor of pure mathematics in the University of Manchester, in recognition of his many important contributions to the theory of numbers. The Adams Prize of the University of Cambridge has been awarded to Dr. H. Davenport, lecturer in mathematics in the University of Manchester, for two essays, (1) "On Waring's Problem", (2) "On the Geometry of Numbers". This double award is a very welcome and well-deserved recognition of the growing of the Manchester school of pure mathematics. Prof. Mordell has been the founder and leader of this school, and Dr. Davenport, formerly his pupil and now his colleague, is the most distinguished of its younger members. He has also attracted a considerable number of foreign mathematicians. His activities have always centred around the theory of numbers, and there is probably no other mathematical school which has contributed so much to the development of that theory during the last ten years.

Aircraft Research Appointments

SIR HENRY TIZARD, rector of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, has been appointed an additional member of the Air Council. In this capacity, and as a member of the Aircraft Supply Council, he will have special responsibility for studying and advising on scientific and technical policy.

Air Vice-Marshal F. J. Linnell, an Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, has been appointed a member of the Aircraft Supply Council in executive charge of research and development. He will be promoted to the acting rank of Air Marshal and will become an additional member of the Air Council on taking up this appointment.

The responsibilities of Sir Frank Smith as the executive head of the Department of the Ministry of Aircraft Production which deals with telecommunications equipment are unaffected by these appointments.

The R.A.F. Food Supplies

THE Air Ministry has appointed Dr. Thomas F. Macrae, a biochemist, and Squadron Leader W. P. Stamm, a specialist medical officer, to watch over the food supplied to the Royal Air Force to ensure that the greatest nutritional value is obtained. Dr. Macrae will investigate foodstuffs in use, and Squadron Leader Stamm will watch for the earliest signs of food deficiency in the health of the men. Both will study the preparation and cooking of food at the various units, the planning of a balanced ration from the available supplies, and the prevention of waste.

The Director-General of Man-Power

MR. G. H. INCE has been appointed by the Minister of Labour and National Service to fill a new post of director-general of man-power. Mr. Ince will take charge of the National Service, Labour Supply, and Military Recruiting Departments of the Ministry. Sir William Beveridge will relinquish the charge of the National Service and Military Recruiting Departments and will act as chairman of a committee, which will also include Sir Charles Craven and Mr. J. C. Little, to examine, in consultation with the three Service Departments, the employment of skilled men in the Forces.

Surgical and Hospital Spirit: Economy Necessary

FOR the good reason that the less the quantity of alcohol absorbed by uses for which alternatives can be substituted the more there will be available for the manufacture of munitions, the authorities are exploring the avenues by which economy in the employment of spirit can be effected. One of the channels through which extremely large quantities of alcohol flow in the course of a year is connected with surgical and hospital practice, and the attention of the Government departments concerned with the conservation of supplies of material is focused on this channel at the present time. It may well be that official instructions will be issued shortly to medical and hospital officers and nursing staffs of Service and other departments to exercise strict economy in the use of spirit for medical and surgical purposes as well as in nursing practice. Action will not stop at the Navy, Army and Air Force Services, for a strong appeal is likely to be made to surgeons and hospital staffs generally to use alcohol as sparingly as possible; it is probable also that recommendations will be issued by a body of recognized experts on the ways in which the use of alcohol may be avoided without prejudice to patients. The sterilization and storing of instruments, the habit common among surgeons of using alcohol for their hands before the gloves are put on, the use of tincture of iodine for the preparation of the patient's skin for operative incisions, the custom of swabbing spirit over the suture line when stitches are removed and the use of methylated spirit for preventing bed sores are the chief outlets of alcohol in surgical work and nursing methods.

There are alternative ways of producing the desired effects efficiently and they will probably be described in an authoritative memorandum. The use of dry heat is an appropriate substitute for spirit for the sterilization of the most important surgical instruments composed solely of steel or glass; if that method is not available, another effective means of sterilizing many types of instruments is by boiling them immediately before use. The risk of blunting the edges of surgical knives