in this aspect of botany. The great advances in physiology and genetics which marked the later years of his life never seemed to capture his imagination in the same way.

Prof. Bentley was a real lover of plants, in the field and also in the garden and allotment which he tended with such care. He took pleasure in bringing in fresh material of all kinds for his students to examine, and was always anxious that they should not accept without question the text-book accounts of familiar plants. He showed great skill in Nature photography and illustrated his lectures with many slides of his own making. Before his retirement, a good deal of his time was spent in the devoted care of his wife who, following overstrain in the First World War, was somewhat of an invalid. His own latter years in Cheltenham were clouded by her death and by the gradual loss of his eyesight.

_____

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Nikolai Morozov, honorary member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., known for his general writings on scientific topics, on July 13, aged ninety-two.

Mr. H. G. Wells, on August 13, aged seventy-nine.

# NEWS and VIEWS

## Mathematics at Edinburgh:
### Sir Edmund Whittaker, F.R.S.

ON September 30, Sir Edmund Whittaker vacates the chair of mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, which he has held for a third of a century. Educated at Manchester Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge, he was second wrangler (equal with J. H. Grace), Bromwich being senior wrangler; afterwards, he was first Smith's Prizeman and he was elected to a fellowship at Trinity in 1896. Much of Sir Edmund's earlier scientific interest centred in theoretical astronomy, particularly in celestial mechanics; during 1901–7 he was secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society and in 1906 he was appointed Royal Astronomer of Ireland. Although his election to the chair of mathematics at Edinburgh in 1912 terminated his official astronomical career, Sir Edmund retains a lively interest in theoretical astronomy, particularly, in these latter days, in the problems of relativistic cosmogony to which he has made some notable contributions, among which may be mentioned his Riddell Lectures at Durham in 1941 on "The Beginning and End of the World". One of his achievements at Edinburgh was the institution of a Mathematical Laboratory in which students obtained a training in the science and practice of computing; the "Calculus of Observations" written by him in collaboration with G. Robinson (a member of his staff) is now the standard work in this field of mathematical discipline. Sir Edmund's other books are "Modern Analysis" (with G. N. Watson), "Treatise on Analytical Dynamics", "Theory of Optical Instruments" and the "History of the Theories of the Aether and Electricity". When Sir Arthur Eddington died in 1944, he left a nearly completed manuscript of a book on "The Fundamental Constants of Nature"; there could only be one choice of editor to see the book through the press, and Sir Edmund has given his time unsparingly in this cause, now nearing fruition.

Sir Edmund was elected to the Royal Society in 1905 and was awarded the Sylvester Medal in 1935. He was president of the Mathematical Association in 1920–1, president of Section A of the British Association in 1927 and president of the London Mathematical Society in 1928–29, being De Morgan Medallist in 1935. During 1939–44 he occupied with distinction the presidential chair of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; it is not too much to say that the Society owes an immeasurable debt to him for maintaining its activities at the highest level during these difficult war years. He has received honorary degrees from several universities and his knighthood in 1945 came as a fitting reward for a life of devoted service and notable achievement.

### Dr. A. C. Aitken, F.R.S.

DR. ALEXANDER CRAIG AITKEN has been appointed to succeed Sir Edmund Whittaker as professor of mathematics in the University of Edinburgh.

Dr. Aitken, who was born at Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1895, graduated at the University of Otago, and went in 1923 as a research student to Edinburgh, where his subsequent life has been spent. After two years he submitted a thesis of such quality that, on the recommendation of the examiners, the Senatus awarded him the degree of D.Sc. instead of the Ph.D. for which he had entered. He was then appointed to the staff, and in recent years has attracted a steady flow of research students from all over the world. An original impetus towards numerical mathematics doubtless came from his own extraordinary powers in mental arithmetic: for the benefit of those who are not gifted in this way, one of his earliest achievements was to devise methods by which most of the problems with which the practical mathematician is confronted can be reduced to repetitions of a process peculiarly suited to an arithmometer, namely, a cross-multiplication followed by a division. His original papers of the last twenty years have effected notable advances in the theory of matrices and determinants, and the mathematical theory of statistics; and there have been occasional irruptions into other branches of mathematics, such as his remarkable theorem which comprehends in one formula Taylor's theorem and the other expansion-theorems which involve derivatives, all 'single-line' difference interpolation formulæ, and a multitude of other possibilities.

## Physiology at Manchester: Prof. W. Schlapp

DR. WALTER SCHLAPP, who will succeed Prof. H. S. Raper (see Nature of August 17, p. 233) in the Brackenbury chair of physiology at the University of Manchester, received his early training in Edinburgh. He first studied chemistry under Sir James Walker and then physiology under Sir Edward Sharpey