NEWS and VIEWS

Death of President Beneš

By the passing of Dr. Eduard Beneš on September 3 at the age of sixty-four, Czechoslovakia loses its former president, and the world loses a cultured and learned man who had striven for the welfare of all mankind during the past forty years. Born in the Bohemian village of Kožlany on May 28, 1884, Beneš studied philosophy, philology and sociology at Prague and later at Dijon, where his thesis was "Le problème autrichien et la question tchèque". Beneš then spent a short time in London and Berlin before returning to Prague, where he attracted T. G. Masaryk's attention. In 1915 Beneš escaped to Geneva, and with Masaryk and Štefánik (a Slovak astronomer who became an air force general and Czechoslovak War Minister) organised Czech resistance to the Central Powers. Beneš became Czechoslovak Foreign Minister of the first provisional Government, and after the republic was established in October 1918, he retained that post in successive administrations until he succeeded Masaryk as president in 1935. His work became more arduous with the rise of Nazism in Germany, and Beneš had soon to face another exile. Returning in 1945 as president of liberated Czechoslovakia, he was confronted with greater problems than before, since war and occupation had brought more distress than the First World War. The strain of post-war anxieties, the events of February last and Jan Masaryk's suicide, deeply affected him. President Beneš, who had always maintained an interest in learning and culture (especially in the social sciences) made his last public speech on April 7, at the sexcentenary celebrations of the University of Prague (see *Nature*, May 1, p. 670). Among the exhibits in connexion with these celebrations were several items associated with Benes' academic life, including the original Dijon thesis. Since February, President and Mme. Beneš had lived in their country house at Ústí Sezimovo in south Bohemia and had taken no part in public affairs, although he did not resign from the presidency until June 7. Like the Masaryks, Benes was a 'great European' with wide vision, and though his work for greater understanding among peoples seems recently to have been in vain, he has shown mankind the way.

Presentation to Sir John Parsons, C.B.E., F.R.S.

At a ceremony held in the Royal College of Surgeons on September 3, Sir John Parsons was presented with his portrait in oils, painted by Mr. John Gilroy. The presentation was made by Sir Stewart Duke-Elder, in the name of the members of the Faculty of Ophthalmologists and the Ophthalmological Society, and to mark the celebration of Sir John's eightieth birthday. It is good that Sir John's long and strenuous career has met with such a fitting and happy culmination, for he has long been the acknowledged leader in all aspects of British ophthalmology —clinical work, basic research and public activities. For more than a generation he has been the recognized leader in the clinical practice of this specialty, and opthalmologists of a much wider circle than Great Britain to-day treat their patients better because of his precepts and his writings. So long as ophthalmology is a science, his name will be remembered for the work he did fifty years ago as a pioneer in ophthalmic pathology. To-day he is still the foremost authority in the fundamental sciences concerning vision—biological, physiological and psychological. In guiding, stimulating and encouraging ophthalmic research he has in his time stood out almost alone. In all problems concerning vision successive Governments and industry have asked and received his help; he served in the two World Wars, in the First as consultant to the Army, in the Second as adviser to the Royal Air Force; in international ophthalmology he has consistently been an acceptable and gracious British ambassador; and for years he was the dominant figure in the social and political life of the ophthalmologists of Britain.

Probably, however, the greatest contribution which Sir John Parsons has made is the historical continuity he has succeeded in maintaining between the past and the future. In his youth, ophthalmology in Britain was great among the nations; but later—largely because with the evolution of science, individual effort had to give place to organised effort for which we were not prepared or equipped—ophthalmology undoubtedly lost its place in Britain. He was largely responsible for reinvigorating it to what may be a future as great as or greater than its past. To-day those who have eyes to see may discern the beginnings of the fruits of his labours. Thirty years ago he was responsible for interesting the Medical Research Council in ophthalmological problems, and to-day these are fully consolidated. Twenty years ago he endeavoured to bring about an amalgamation of London hospitals and inaugurate a research institute; to-day, that is an accomplished fact. He was primarily responsible for the inauguration of the Faculty of Ophthalmologists, and to-day it is growing lustily. To him and to all of us these promising developments of his ambitions ought to be a source of satisfaction.

Physiology at the London Hospital

Prof. D. T. Harris

Prof. D. T. Harris, on whom the title of professor emeritus has been conferred by the University of London, is to retire at the end of the present session from the chair of physiology which he has held at the London Hospital for the past sixteen years. Prof. Harris studied physics as a special subject at Cardiff, where he took his B.Sc. in 1904. He graduated in medicine at Manchester in 1914 and after holding various hospital appointments and experiencing general practice served as a temporary captain in the R.A.M.C. After a short period as lecturer in physiology at Manchester under Prof. William Stirling, he joined the Institute of Physiology at University College, London, where he held a Beit Memorial Research Fellowship and as Sharpey Research Scholar came under the influence of Sir William Baylis and Prof. E. H. Starling. He obtained the D.Sc. London in 1926 and held the post of assistant professor of physiology in University College, London, when he was appointed to the chair at the London Hospital in 1932. Throughout his academic career Prof. Harris has maintained his interest in physics, his scientific work being mainly concerned with problems arising in the territory bridging physics and physiology, and in particular with the biological action of ultra-violet radiations and ultra-short waves. His contributions to knowledge of these subjects have been published in a series of papers in the *Journals of Physiology*, *Biochemistry* and *Scientific Instruments*, and his textbook on "Ultra-Violet Radiation" is widely used by

operators of ultra-violet lamps who wish to study underlying principles and methods of measurement. In another direction he applied his knowledge of physics to his hobby—photography—and this brought him in contact with the scientific research workers in the cinematograph industry, to whom he gave a series of lectures on stereoscopy.

In the immediate post-war period of intensified university education of 1919–22, Prof. Harris found full scope for his exceptional and natural aptitude for teaching. Large numbers of medical students, and in particular the ex-Service group who came back to complete their medical studies under a sense of urgency to make up for lost time, have cause to be grateful to him for the personal interest he took in their problems and for the systematic clarity of exposition which characterized his lectures and the practical courses he gave for the examinations of the University of London and the Royal Colleges. His book on experimental physiology is used by students in many parts of the world. As a teacher and examiner, Prof. Harris has played a notable part in medical education during the past thirty years, and his many friends will be gratified to learn that, even after his retirement from the London Hospital, he will actively participate in the developments in the teaching of physiology sponsored by the Royal College of Surgeons.

Agricultural Research Council: Lord Rothschild

THE Committee of the Privy Council for Agricultural Research has appointed Lord Rothschild to be chairman of the Agricultural Research Council in succession to Lord De La Warr. Lord Rothschild was born in 1910 and was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge, of which he was a fellow during 1935–39. He served in the Army Intelligence Corps during the War and was awarded the George Medal in 1944; was mentioned in dispatches and received the American Bronze Star and Legion of Merit. Lord Rothschild is a biologist, who has carried out research work in the Department of Zoology at Cambridge and has published a number of scientific papers; he has also agricultural interests. He is a member of the boards of the British Overseas Airways Corporation and the Overseas Food Corporation.

Central African Scientific Liaison Office: Mr. R. McChlery

ON September 1, the Central African Council established, on behalf of the Governments of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, a Central African Scientific Liaison Office in the British Commonwealth of Nations Scientific Offices, Kingsway, London. This arrangement whereby three Colonies, acting jointly, follow the lead of the Dominions by appointing a scientific liaison officer to London provides an interesting new phase in the developing pattern of Commonwealth scientific relations. Mr. R. McChlery, who becomes the first Central African scientific liaison officer in London, went from school at Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, to take a science degree at Rhodes University College, Grahamstown. He was then awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and proceeded to Exeter College, Oxford, where he obtained the B.A. degree in chemistry in 1925 and the B.Sc. degree in 1926. Following a short course of study at Rothamsted Agricultural Research Station he returned to Southern Rhodesia to join the Chemistry Branch of the Department of Agriculture, where he has since been employed, mainly on problems connected with soil fertility and crop production.

Oxford Science

Oxford Science makes a welcome reappearance after an absence of nearly nine years. Under the general editorship of F. A. Holland, it gives a survey of scientific development in the University of Oxford and is particularly designed to keep the person with a scientific education informed of the progress made in fields of science other than his own. Articles in the present issue (**2**, No. 1, June 1948) are by A. J. Birch and D. K. C. MacDonald on metal-ammonia solutions; C. J. Dickenson on functional organisation within the cell; J. D. Dunitz and S. C. Wallwork on some developments in structural chemistry; A. H. Cooke on magnetism at low temperatures, and H. M. Sinclair on nutritional science. In the editorial, reference is made to the part played by Oxford men of science in the nation's war effort, to the new laboratories under construction or about to be constructed, and to the closing down of the last of the college laboratories, so that laboratory teaching is now entirely in the hands of the University staffs. Only brief mention is made of the important physical work done in the new Clarendon Laboratory; but a fuller report can be found in *Oxford*, **9**, No. 2, p. 54 (1946–47). Those interested in the progress of chemistry at Oxford may like to refer to the article by F. M. Brewer in *Oxford*, **9**, No. 3, p. 98 (1948), which is very informative.

United States Book Exchange

A BUREAU for the international exchange of books and periodicals between libraries, scientific and educational institutions of the United States and other countries has been opened in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The organisation, known as the United States Book Exchange, is a successor to the American Book Centre for War Devastated Libraries, Inc., and the executive director is Miss Alice D. Ball, formerly acting director of the Book Centre. While the new organisation will continue the rehabilitation programme of the Book Centre, libraries of foreign countries are expected to become members of the new Book Exchange and contribute material to the programme as well as draw from it. During the past two and a half years, more than 1,250,000 volumes have been sent out by the Book Centre, to war-devastated libraries in thirty-one countries. At first the activities of the Book Exchange are being limited to printed matter of scientific or literary character; this will include books, pamphlets, periodicals, government documents, music, printed leaflets, and occasional papers. At present no microfilm and microprint will be dealt with, and no motion pictures, art reproductions and newspapers; but it is hoped eventually to handle all types of printed and filmed material.

Mitigation of Spray Injury

IT is an essential prerequisite of a fungicidal spray that it should not itself cause damage on the plants to which it is applied. This is, unfortunately, not always the case, for lime-sulphur sometimes causes early leaf-drop on the apples Cox's Orange Pippin and Worcester Pearmain. M. H. Moore has shown (*J. Pom. and Hort. Sci.*, **23**, 3 and 4, Dec. 1947) that