

NEWS and VIEWS

Prof. F. E. Fritsch, F.R.S.

AFTER forty-one years as head of his Department, Prof. F. E. Fritsch retired from the chair of botany, Queen Mary College, London, on September 30, in his seventieth year. Though scarcely expected in boyhood to live to twenty, his already long and remarkable career has been an arduous one, its keynote continuous application sustained by a powerful sense of the absolute value of knowledge and work. In 1905, during his first appointment as assistant professor (1902-10) at University College, London, he obtained his D.Sc. (London), started a year's additional work at Birkbeck College and completed with Boodle the well-known translation of Solereder's "Systematic Anatomy". In 1907, when Queen Mary College (then East London College) was first recognized as a school of the University of London, he was appointed to take sole charge of the newly initiated Botany Department, becoming in 1910 its full-time professor with one assistant. His eight years collaboration with Salisbury from 1912 onwards resulted in the five familiar and ubiquitous joint text-books, and were shortly followed by his appointment to the University chair. His large and continuous output of contributions to algal and other botanical literature, even including the re-writing of West's "British Freshwater Algæ" which appeared revised in 1927 and the production of his largest work, "The Structure and Reproduction of the Algæ" (2 volumes, 1935 and 1945), though testifying to his unremitting industry, betray only a fraction of the activities he found possible concurrently with routine work and the steady development of his Department, which were rewarded in 1932 by election as a fellow of the Royal Society. He took an active share in the foundation in that year of the British Freshwater Biological Station at Wray Castle, on the Council of which he has acted as chairman ever since. His gift for diplomatic organisation and management has rendered him invaluable on numerous committees, including the Library, Scholarships and Central Research Fund Committees of the University of London.

To Prof. Fritsch himself this milestone of retirement will make comparatively little difference. Mentally vigorous as ever and still looking forward, he will continue to act on all these Committees in London, and by the courtesy of Prof. F. T. Brooks and his successor, Prof. G. E. Briggs, he is being enabled to continue his algal work in highly congenial surroundings at the Botany School, Cambridge. His friendly personality, equable disposition and philosophic outlook have ever made him an entirely congenial colleague. With his retirement Queen Mary College loses its longest servant, and the whole staff will miss the cheerful presence of an esteemed personal friend.

Wave-lengths for Broadcasting

FOLLOWING the meeting held by the International Telecommunications Union in Atlantic City in 1947 (see *Nature*, May 29, 1948, p. 863), a series of subsidiary conferences is being held in various parts of the world to deal with the allocation of radio wave-lengths for various purposes. According to *The Times*, a three-months conference in Copenhagen has just reached agreement on a new plan for the distribution of the long and medium wave-bands for European broadcasting stations. The new convention, which

has been signed by twenty-five countries, will come into effect in March 1950, and will mean that many of the B.B.C.'s transmitters will have to change their operating frequencies. The allocation of short waves for sound broadcasting purposes will be decided by a conference which is to meet at Mexico City on October 22.

The last effective plan for the allocation of broadcasting wave-lengths to the European countries was made at Lucerne in 1933 (see *Nature*, December 2, 1933, p. 848, and January 20, 1934, p. 94); since then, the claims of some countries, particularly those which were less technically advanced at that time, have greatly increased. But the number of wave-length channels available has not increased, and so agreement on a new allocation has only been possible by some nations accepting less than their full requirements. The Lucerne plan gave the United Kingdom one long and ten medium wave-lengths; but in order to carry on its services, the B.B.C. has taken into use another long and two additional medium wave-lengths, which had been allocated to other countries. The new Copenhagen plan gives the United Kingdom one long and thirteen medium wave-lengths, and in some cases increased power may be used. These are considered to be sufficient for the B.B.C. programmes to be carried on substantially as they are at present.

German Scientific Text-books

DR. JULIAN HUXLEY writes: "Students of biological evolution will, I think, be interested to hear something about the new book by Dr. Bernhard Rensch, 'Neue Probleme der Abstammungslehre', published by Ferdinand Enke Verlag, Stuttgart, 1947, which I have recently received and read. It appears to me to be a most valuable work, which treats of the method, and especially the course, of evolution, in a comprehensive way. Its most original feature is the number of tables it contains, giving quantitative expression to various rules of evolution. It is also interesting in that the author, though working in complete isolation during the War, has arrived at conclusions in general similar to those reached by American and British specialists in the subject during the same period.

"It may be also useful to set forth the methods by which this, and other German books, may now be obtained. Anyone wishing to purchase books published in Germany may do so by placing his order through any bookseller, who may then apply directly to the publisher in Germany. The transaction is administered through the Joint Export and Import Agency of Military Government and payment can be made in the currency of the country in which the original order is placed. The delay in obtaining the book may be a matter of some weeks, or, of course, considerably longer if the publisher has not previously obtained a licence for export from the Joint Export and Import Agency. However, many publishers who foresee a demand outside Germany for a particular book will have obtained the required licence soon after the appearance of the book in Germany."

Chemical Names, Formulæ and Ciphers

THE system of notation of organic chemical compounds described by Dr. G. M. Dyson has quickly been followed by a second, and those who missed the original lecture in Birmingham last October will now be able to study at leisure what Messrs. Gordon,