

of beauty and full of humanitarian sentiment. He was a well-known figure at physiological congresses in Paris, Budapest, London, Boston, Leningrad, Venice, Edinburgh, and was loved for his kindly, gentle nature by friends and students the world over. Music was his favourite recreation, and he loved to travel, always taking his family with him. His wife, whom he married early in life, and three of his children, survive him.

M. POLANYI

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Sir Wilfrid Grigson, C.S.I., sometime director-general of revenue in Hyderabad, author of "The

Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar" and other anthropological studies, on November 26, aged fifty-two.

Dr. Louis Rapkine, director of the Department of Cell Chemistry, Pasteur Institute, Paris, on December 13.

Dr. Marjory Stephenson, M.B.E., F.R.S., of the Medical Research Council Unit for Chemical Microbiology, on December 12, aged sixty-two.

We are glad to learn from Prof. J. Heyrovský, of the Charles University, Prague, that Dr. F. Böhouněk, whose death was announced in *Nature* of December 4, is alive and well.

## NEWS and VIEWS

### U.S. National Academy of Sciences: Agassiz Medal

THE National Academy of Sciences presented the Alexander Agassiz Gold Medal and honorarium for 1948 to Dr. Thomas Gordon Thompson at the autumn meeting of the Academy held at the University of California, Berkeley, on November 15. Dr. Thompson, professor of chemistry and director of the oceanographic laboratories of the University of Washington at Seattle and Friday Harbor in the State of Washington, has long been a leader in investigations of the complex chemistry of the ocean, with special attention to the waters of the north-east Pacific, Puget Sound, the San Juan Archipelago and the Bering and Chukchi Seas. Under his inspiration and leadership, his associates and students have devised and developed effective methods and techniques for the isolation and the quantitative determination of many of the elements and their compounds which occur in minute concentrations in sea water. Examples of such are iron, lithium, silicon, manganese, aluminium, boron and radium, the fluorides, phosphates and silicates, the isotopes of the elements of water and the dissolved gases, and the ionic ratios of the major constituents of sea water in various parts of the ocean. In organising the oceanographic laboratories at Seattle and Friday Harbor, Dr. Thompson brought together specialists in the fundamental sciences associated with the various departments of a great university, and directed their attention and stimulated their interest in the many problems presented by oceanic phenomena. Dr. Thompson has been chairman of various international committees, particularly the committee of the International Association of Physical Oceanography, appointed for the purpose of establishing standard units and procedures for the promotion of studies of the chemistry of the ocean. Established by Sir John Murray in 1911, the Alexander Agassiz Gold Medal is awarded by the Academy "for original contribution in the science of oceanography to scientific men in any part of the world"

### William Davidson of Aberdeen: 1648

A **TERCENTENARY** Memorial Lecture entitled "William Davidson of Aberdeen: The First Scots Professor of Chemistry" was delivered in Marischal College, Aberdeen, on November 26, 1948, by Dr. John Read, professor of chemistry in the University of St. Andrews. Davidson was a native of Aberdeenshire who graduated at Marischal College in 1617 and then migrated to France. Here he became known as an

authority on medicine, pharmacy and chemistry. He gave instruction in medical chemistry of the Paracelsian type, and was appointed a physician to the French king. In 1647 he was nominated to the first chair of chemistry to be founded in France, at the Jardin du Roi in Paris, where he entered upon his duties in 1648. Davidson was one of the three earliest occupants of a chair of chemistry, and the first native of the British Isles to become a professor of chemistry. Owing to religious and medical jealousies, he was forced to resign the chair in 1651; thenceforward, until 1667, he was chief physician to the King of Poland. He died in Paris in 1669. Besides various medical works, Davidson wrote an early text-book of chemistry entitled "Philosophia Pyrotechnica". Although imbued with the ideas of his alchemical predecessors, and given to associating the doctrines of chemistry with religious and metaphysical conceptions, he has claims to be called a chemist rather than an alchemist. Davidson was particularly proud of the blue blood of Scotland that ran in his veins; in 1629 he obtained a patent of nobility from Charles I and thereafter styled himself 'Nobilis Scotus'. To account for his entering the medical profession he told his readers that "professors of medicine were invested with such honour by the kings of Scotland that they enjoyed a title equal to that of earls".

### U.S. Scientific Mission to Japan

THE Supreme Commander, Allied Powers ('SCAP') has announced that a United States scientific mission to Japan "is scheduled to arrive in that country on or about November 26 and may be expected to remain until about December 18, 1948". The mission is composed of five distinguished American men of science, selected by the National Academy of Sciences, and includes: Dr. Detlev W. Bronk, chairman of the National Research Council, foreign secretary of the National Academy of Sciences, and president-elect of Johns Hopkins University; Dr. E. C. Stakman, chief of the division of plant pathology and botany, University of Minnesota; Dr. Zay Jeffries, vice-president of the General Electric Company, and general manager of its chemical department; Dr. I. I. Rabi, professor of physics, Columbia University; Dr. Roger Adams, head of the department of chemistry, University of Illinois, and chairman of the scientific advisory group that visited Japan in 1947. Dr. Bronk is chairman of the present mission. The new mission is making the visit at a time when some forty