

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

thousand Japanese scientific workers, representing all fields of research, are participating in the election of 210 members for the country's first National Science Council. This election, due on December 20, is considered to be of unusual interest as it is thought to represent the first attempt of scientific workers of any country as a whole to elect members of its supreme scientific organ. The mission is expected to review progress made by Japanese men of science in the development of democratic national organisations for scientific activity. It is expected to bring up to date the report submitted by the previous advisory group; recommendations by that group served as guides to 'SCAP' sections in judging proposals of the Japanese for the reorganisation of national scientific bodies. The group proposes to spend approximately one day each in Sendai, Sapporo, Kyoto and Hiroshima; the remainder of the time will be spent in Tokyo in discussion with 'SCAP' personnel and Japanese scientific workers.

### Vacation Work for Technical Students

THE fourteenth annual report for the year ending October 1948 by the Vacation Work Scheme of the Imperial College of Science and Technology has recently been published. The Scheme aims at providing work in Great Britain and abroad for students during their vacation, and it is almost entirely voluntary in nature. During 1948, 829 students participated as compared with 705 in 1947 (this increase being largely due to a greater number of overseas students); and this year's total was made up of 200 overseas students and 629 British, 194 of these latter having worked abroad. The bulk of the British students (591 in actual number) was drawn from the three Colleges which form the Imperial College, namely, the Royal College of Science, Royal School of Mines, and City and Guilds College. In January 1948 an international conference was held in London at the Imperial College to unify the procedure and minimize the correspondence for the exchange of students between different States; ten countries sent representatives and an organisation was founded called the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience. During the recent summer vacation this Association has successfully exchanged 950-1,000 students between the participating countries. The next conference of this Association will be held in Copenhagen during January 3-7, 1949. As a result of the establishment of this Association, central organisations have been set up in each country; the governors of the Imperial College have decided to broaden their machinery, coping with international exchange, to include undergraduates from other universities and colleges in Great Britain, and this information has already been communicated. The aim is to make the scheme self-supporting, if possible, through an affiliation fee payable by each college concerned (based on the number of students sent abroad) together with a registration fee payable by the student. Offers of financial assistance have already been made by Messrs. Lever Brothers and Unilever, Ltd., Rolls Royce, Ltd., and the National Oil Refineries, Ltd., and it is anticipated that the scheme will be in operation for the summer of 1949.

### Management Abstracts

FOR these days, *Management Abstracts*, the first issue of a series of specialized publications dealing with the different aspects of management to be published by the British Institute of Management

(London), seems rather a lavish production. It covers some two hundred British and Overseas publications dealing with current developments in management science, and the abstracts are classified under such headings as general management and organisation; works management; personnel and welfare; financial management; distribution; supplies; transport; statistics; public administration; education and training. *Management Abstracts* will be issued monthly and is intended to cover, eventually, material published in any part of the world; but on its present scale such cover can scarcely be obtained without very considerable expansion on the first two issues. The basis of selection of the abstracts is not apparent, although the more important articles published in Great Britain in recent months appear to be included. For the annual subscription of 30s. (or 3s. per copy) the business executive may, as it is claimed, save some time; but the production is unlikely to give him much that he cannot readily obtain, and probably earlier, from an efficient firm's library. The publication also includes "Book Notes", which are brief and mainly descriptive. This section might perhaps be expanded with advantage and the length of the abstracts curtailed, particularly if the latter were made purely descriptive and not, as in these two issues, in part critical.

### Milk: from Cow to Consumer

WALLACE PRODUCTIONS, LTD., have just finished making a documentary film for the United Dairies, Ltd. This film, which lasts for about half an hour, is called "The Milky Way" and was shown to a small invited audience on November 30 at the British Council Theatre in London. It tells the story of the production, pasteurization and distribution of milk under modern conditions with particular reference to London (the United Dairies, Ltd., being one of the major suppliers of milk in the London area); but the theme is representative of any large town or city where rigid precautions are taken with regard to the safety and purity of milk. The general scientific level of the film has been designed for showing to student-nurses and the senior science forms of secondary schools; but it can be recommended to any intelligent person, scientific or otherwise. The emphasis stressed throughout is on hygiene; but the full account of milk from cow to consumer is amply and well told. The makers and sponsors of this documentary film are to be congratulated on a production which has entertainment value as well as scientific and educational interest.

### Information Services Committee

ARISING out of the Scientific Information Conference held last June, the Council of the Royal Society has set up a Standing Committee on Information Services. The terms of reference are: (1) to advise on means of improving existing methods of publishing, abstracting, indexing and distributing scientific information and, in particular, to advise on the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference; (2) to report to the Council of the Royal Society.

The following have agreed to serve on the committee: Sir Alfred Egerton (*chairman*); the Treasurer and the Secretaries of the Royal Society; Dr. T. E. Allibone; Prof. J. D. Bernal; Dr. G. L. Brown; Sir David Chadwick; Mr. J. E. Cummins; Dr. G. M. Findlay; Dr. J. E. Holmstrom; Dr. A. King; Dr. J. G. Malloch; and Dr. C. F. A. Pantin.