

been "Creative Chemistry", which for a decade has held its own among the best sellers. Among his other works are "Easy Lessons in Einstein", "Science Remaking the World", "Keeping Up with Science", "Chats on Science", "Sermons of a Chemist", "Great American Universities", "Plots and Personalities", "The Spirit of American Education", and "Six Major Prophets". He contributed prolifically to magazines, newspapers, and reference works, including the new edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica". During his eight years as director of Science Service he trained a group of young writers in the ways of popular presentation of science, and these will now carry on his work.

PROF. HEINRICH BECKURTS.

DR. HEINRICH BECKURTS, who resigned the chair of pharmaceutical and food-stuffs chemistry at the Technische Hochschule at Brunswick in 1925, died suddenly on Sept. 15 at Bartgeheide, near Hamburg. From the *Chemiker-Zeitung* we learn that Prof. Beckurts was born at Brunswick in 1855. He graduated at Jena, and in 1877 was appointed an assistant at the Institute of Pharmaceutical Chemistry at Brunswick, where in 1885 he was elected to the newly founded chair, which he retained for forty years. At the same time his former chief, Dr. Robert Otto, who had been professor of general and pharmaceutical chemistry, remained as director of the laboratories. On the retirement of Otto in 1899, Beckurts became director of the pharmaceutical chemical institute, and shortly afterwards the title of Geheimer Medizinalrat was conferred upon him. This title he held until his death.

In spite of the fact that Beckurts remained throughout his career in his native place, he soon achieved a world-wide reputation. It was largely owing to his connexion with the State Department of Health that an institute for the investigation of foodstuffs and of water was founded at Brunswick. The project received at first no financial aid from the State, and it was not until 1900 that his long-cherished wishes were fulfilled. The new institute was designed not only for the training of pharmacists, but also for the official investigation of foodstuffs. During his professorial career, Beckurts devoted himself to the training of students of pharmacy, and the number of candidates who passed the qualifying examination increased very rapidly as the years progressed. His administrative abilities received special recognition on his seventieth birthday, when the title of 'Honorary Senator' of the Technische Hochschule was conferred upon him.

Beckurts found time amongst his multifarious duties for considerable experimental and literary work. His numerous researches, which dealt principally with alkaloids, sulphones, nitriles, and propionic acid, were usually published in the *Archiv der Pharmazie*, which he edited in conjunction with E. Schmidt of Marburg, or in the *Apotheker-Zeitung*, which was established at his suggestion. He also published a work on analytical chemistry for pharmaceutical chemists, and for many years he issued the *Jahresbericht für Pharmazie, Pharmakognosie und Toxicologie*. In collaboration with Dr. B. Hirsch he published a "Handbuch der praktischen Pharmazie", and with Dr. O. Lüning he remodelled Mohr's well-known treatise on volumetric analysis.

News and Views.

THE celebration, not only in the United States, but also in Amsterdam, Rome, and other places, of the fiftieth anniversary of the production by Mr. Thomas A. Edison of his first incandescent electric lamp was a remarkable tribute to the great inventor, now in his eighty-third year. The principal gathering took place at Greenfield, the village constructed by Mr. Henry Ford on his estate at Dearborn, Michigan, to which has been transported the laboratory in which Mr. Edison worked so long at Menlo Park, New Jersey. In the re-erected laboratory, in the presence of President Hoover and many distinguished guests, on Oct. 21, Mr. Edison repeated his historical experiments which resulted in the completion of his first successful lamp. During the celebrations, an account of which was broadcast, Mr. Hoover voiced the nation's appreciation of "men who have that originality of mind and that devotion to industry to carry scientific thought forward in steps and strides until it spreads comfort in every home". The village of Greenfield is to be a part of a great museum of Americana, an object lesson in American progress, which Mr. Ford is inaugurating in connexion with the Edison Institute of Technology.

It is a pity that the celebrations in honour of Mr. Edison and 'Light's Golden Jubilee' should

have been marred by the extravagant claims made for him in connexion with the incandescent electric lamp. In the *Scientific American* for November, Mr. Ford is reported to have said that Edison "by his invention of the incandescent light contributed more to the progress of the world and the comfort of his fellow beings than any other man". The world acclaims Edison as one of the greatest of inventors, but it is not true to say that it recognises him as the founder of the electric lighting industry. It will be remembered that the Institution of Electrical Engineers in Great Britain commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the invention of the incandescent lamp by Sir Joseph Swan on Dec. 20 of last year. 'A résumé of the historical facts on which the claim is founded is given by K. R. Swan in the *Electrician* for Oct. 25. In a recent biography of Edison by G. S. Bryan, Edison is credited with the invention of the 'squirted' filament which gave such stimulus to the more general use of incandescent lighting in the early days. This vital improvement in the manufacture of carbon filaments was due, however, to Swan, who invented it so far back as 1883. It seems a pity that history should be so garbled. In Great Britain the practical manufacture of the incandescent carbon filament lamp owes little to Edison; it was based entirely on Swan's work. Moreover, Mr. A. A.