

## News and Views

Prof. H. C. Urey

It is announced that the Nobel Prize for chemistry for 1934 has been awarded to Prof. H. C. Urey, of Columbia University, New York. Prof. Urey was responsible for the search for a heavier isotope of hydrogen, and for its detection by means of its spectrum. This heavier isotope, of mass about double that of the ordinary hydrogen atom, has since been obtained in the form of its oxide, 'heavy water', in a pure condition, and several other compounds, for example, an ammonia in which the three hydrogen atoms are replaced by heavy hydrogen. The new element has been called deuterium, and has been the subject of intensive investigation during the last two years. Unlike the isotopes of heavier elements, its properties differ in a marked and interesting way from those of ordinary hydrogen, and apart from its intrinsic interest, deuterium has already been put to several uses as an implement of research in various fields of chemistry and physics. Just as the discovery of the element radium by Mme. Curie, a chemist, opened out a new physics, so it may be expected that the discovery of deuterium by the present Nobel laureate in chemistry will have important consequences for physics as well as chemistry.

Robert A. C. Godwin-Austen (1808-84)

NOVEMBER 25 is the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Robert Godwin-Austen (whose name was originally Austen, afterwards changed to Godwin-Austen). Godwin-Austen was prominent in the ranks of the early British geologists, and a notable and constant contributor to geological science. He was born in 1808, and died at Shalford House, Guildford, at the age of seventy-six years. Austen's interest in geology had been stimulated whilst at the University of Oxford, where he had been a pupil of Buckland. He joined the Geological Society of London in 1830 (the year of publication of Lyell's "Principles of Geology"), when Sedgwick was its president, and read his first geological paper at Somerset House entitled, "An Account of the Raised Beach, near Hope's Nose, in Devonshire, and upon recent Disturbances in that Neighbourhood" on November 19, 1834. Austen was then residing at Ogwell House, near Newton Abbot, and this paper was the forerunner of pioneer field work in Devonshire, and a close association with De La Beche. The latter recorded that in the district extending from Dartmouth to Chudleigh he was principally indebted, as regards this part of the Geological Survey Map of Devon, to Austen; Phillips mentioned the "splendid series of fossils . . . fruit of the personal exertions of Mr. Austen". Further observations on south-east Devonshire were embodied in a classic paper covering the years 1834-40. Certain inferences respecting the Coal Measures were detailed in the paper "On the possible Extension of the Coal-measures beneath the south-eastern part of England" (1856). Godwin-Austen was awarded the Wollaston medal of the

Geological Society in 1862, and referred to as "pre-eminently the physical geographer of bygone periods". In later years he resided at Shalford, Guildford, and there were consequent changes in his geological studies in a new area. Godwin-Austen was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1849.

David Douglas, 1798-1834

A BOTANICAL collector and explorer in many British territories, David Douglas, the Scottish naturalist, was born at Scone, near Perth, in 1798, and of humble parentage. To his zealous efforts are due the introduction into England from time to time of numbers of new trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, comprising hundreds of species. Much valuable information, in addition, was derived from him respecting the characteristics of the lands (some hitherto unexplored) that he visited. Douglas in early life began a seven years' gardening apprenticeship with the Earl of Mansfield, at Scone. On its completion, he worked at the Botanic Garden, Glasgow, where his abilities attracted the notice of Dr. W. J. Hooker, then professor of botany in the University of Glasgow, who took him as companion in journeys through the Western Highlands. In 1823, Hooker recommended Douglas to the Royal Horticultural Society of London, for botanical exploration work in North America, and under the Society's auspices he pursued this mission until the year 1827. Various and successive travels followed down to 1833. From California he penetrated northward into Russian America (Alaska) in one of these. Early in 1834, Douglas was at San Francisco and thence he embarked for the Sandwich Islands; in May of that year, he wrote home to Capt. Sabine giving accounts of journeys to the summits of the mountains and volcanoes. In November 1834 news reached England that on July 12, previously, Douglas had lost his life in an unfrequented track through the attack of a bullock. A monument exists at Honolulu recalling the fatality and Douglas's services to science.

Long Heads and Broad Heads in Germany

It has always been a disconcerting fact to those who uphold the Nordic origin of German nationality that the predominant shape of head in the population is broad and flat, rather than of the long narrow Nordic form demanded by the favoured theory of racial origin. Various attempts have been made to explain away the anomaly; while some critics have not hesitated to say that the official figures of head measurements of the population were 'edited' before publication to eliminate the undue proportion of broad heads. Certainly Prof. F. G. Parsons, who measured German prisoners of war, found that they showed a greater breadth by several points than the figures accepted by German anthropologists as representing the German type of head. Some who admit the discrepancy invoke the Mendelian theory of