

News and Views

Henry Fairfield Osborn and the American Museum

PROF. H. FAIRFIELD OSBORN, an obituary of whom appears on p. 784 of this issue of NATURE, was a figure in certain respects unique in American science. In virtue of his great possessions, he belonged to a class more frequently encountered in business than in academic circles in the United States, and his personal connexions played no small part in aiding him to raise the American Museum of Natural History, of which he was honorary life president at the time of his death, to the commanding position in the scientific world which it now holds. Under his controlling influence, its scientific achievement, equally remarkable in range and variety, was no less notable than its growth and its efficiency in material equipment; while graded series of publications, ranging from popular expositions to detailed monographic studies, and from ephemeral announcements of recent discovery to the considered conclusions of prolonged research, became a regular and highly valued feature in the organisation of the Museum, placing the latest developments of its work at the disposal of laymen and the scientific world alike. One of the greatest achievements of the Museum under his régime, and certainly the most spectacular, was the organisation of the great scientific expedition to Mongolia. It was unfortunate that after some years of work, which had produced results of the greatest importance to science in palaeontology, geology, archaeology, and the other branches of research for which provision had been made, clash with Chinese authority should have brought the expedition to a close at a moment when Osborn was about to build up an organisation in China, which promised to emulate within its limits the achievement of the parent institution in New York.

Chromosome Behaviour and Protein Pattern

It is announced in the *Oxford University Gazette* of November 6, that the curators of the University Chest have been authorised by Congregation to receive from the Rockefeller Foundation a grant of £500 a year for five years for the purposes of research in the application of mathematical analysis to biological problems, to be conducted by Dr. Dorothy Wrinch. Apparently this grant is to enable Dr. Wrinch to continue and develop her researches into relationships between chromosomes and protein aggregates which have been the subject of several notable contributions, three of which appeared in NATURE during the past year (134, 978; 135, 788; 136, 68). She graduated at Cambridge in 1916 and was a wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos. Since then she has had a distinguished career in teaching and research, having been successively lecturer in the Department of Pure Mathematics, University College, London; Yarrow scientific research fellow and Bertha Ayrton fellow of Girton College, Cambridge;

and lecturer in mathematics and Susette Taylor fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. While holding the two last-named fellowships in 1931-34 she spent part of the time at the Universities of Vienna, Paris, and Prague. So long ago as 1921, Dr. Wrinch contributed a paper to NATURE, with Dr. Harold Jeffreys, on "The Relation of Geometry to Einstein's Theory of Gravitation"; and among many other subjects of wide interest with which she has dealt in papers to scientific societies are the theory of probability, principles of scientific inquiry, relations of science and philosophy, and boundary problems of mathematical physics. Her recent work on the structure and behaviour of chromosomes in relation to protein aggregates is a new field of inquiry from which further results of high importance may be confidently anticipated.

The King of the Belgians

At the general meeting of the Linnean Society of London held on November 7, His Majesty The King of the Belgians was unanimously elected an honorary member of the Society. His Majesty is known to take a keen interest in natural history. When Crown Prince, he made a voyage to the Dutch East Indies in 1928-29, one result of which was a very important collection of specimens for the Royal Museum of Natural History in Brussels. He has also taken an active interest in the preservation of the fauna of Africa by the establishment of Nature reserves. The great Parc National Albert in the Belgian Congo, the area of which has recently been greatly extended, owes much to His Majesty's patronage and influence, and constitutes one of the most important experiments ever made in the conservation of wild Nature.

American Stratosphere Balloon Explorer II

A NOTABLE achievement falls to the credit of Cpts. A. W. Stevens and Earl A. Anderson of the U.S. Army Air Corps, who, according to the reports in the daily Press, have successfully piloted their stratosphere balloon up to the record height of 74,000 feet. The previous record was held by the ill-fated Russian balloon *Osoaviakhim* which probably reached a height of 72,000 feet on January 30, 1934. After the first set-back of last July, when the top of *Explorer II* burst and released 375,000 cubic feet of helium, another occurred on Monday, November 11, when a 20-ft. rent in the envelope, produced during its inflation, had to be repaired at the last moment. The ascent was made at 7 a.m. from a point eleven miles west of Rapid City, and a safe landing was made in the evening at White Lake, South Dakota. Capt. Stevens reported by wireless that at his maximum height the external temperature was -55°C ., the cosmic ray intensity 150 times that at the earth's surface, and that the sky had become a jet black awning.