News and Views

Sir Thomas Holland, K.C.S.I., F.R.S.

THE Albert Medal of the Royal Society of Arts for 1939 has been awarded to Sir Thomas H. Holland, "for his services to the mineral industries". Sir Thomas Holland is principal and vice-chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, and in the course of a long and distinguished career has rendered eminent services to industry and industrial research, both at home and in the Empire. Outstanding among the results of his overseas activities is his close connexion with the development of Indian industry, which to-day is based upon the recommendations of the Indian Industrial Commission over which he presided in 1916. He has held many high appointments in institutions connected with science, geology, mining, metallurgy and petroleum, and was chairman of the Council of the Royal Society of Arts during 1925–27. The Albert Medal was instituted in 1862 as a memorial of H.R.H. the Prince Consort, for eighteen years president of the Society, and is awarded annually for "distinguished merit in promoting Arts, Manufactures or Commerce".

Use of Oxygen in Climbing

PROF. YANDELL HENDERSON'S article on "The Last 1,000 ft. on Everest", published in NATURE of June 3, p. 921, gives expression to the physiologist's doubts about the possibility of climbing to 29,000 ft. without the use of oxygen. Prof. Henderson attempts the difficult task of analysing the fall in climbing speed with increase in altitude and suggests that it reaches zero at 29,000 ft. If this conclusion is correct, it is folly to attempt the ascent of Mount Everest without oxygen, but mountaineers may answer that information about climbing speeds at great altitudes is too scanty to justify any precise estimate of limiting altitudes and may point out that, so far, climbers have done as well without oxygen as with it. The most compelling argument in favour of the use of oxygen would be the production of a really effective apparatus. On this point Prof. Henderson is emphatic that the so-called open apparatus is valueless and that a closed unit, involving absorption of carbon dioxide, is essential. But in spite of the possible theoretical advantage of the latter type, it has never been successfully used for climbing at high altitudes. The open apparatus, however, as is pointed out in an article on p. 961 of this issue, by a member of last year's Everest expedition, has twice been used with some success. For the future, it is clear that there is ample room for improvement in methods of oxygen administration in climbing. Increase in efficiency of utilization is desirable provided that it does not sacrifice other essential qualities, but another and perhaps easier line of attack is the reduction of weight by mechanical improvement of valves and cylinders.

Scientific Psychology in France

THE centenary of the birth of Theodule Ribot, and the jubilee of the foundation of the chair of experimental psychology in the College de France, of the Laboratory of physiological psychology at the Sorbonne, and of the famous thesis, "L'Automatisme psychologique", submitted by Pierre Janet, will be celebrated by a gathering at the Sorbonne on June 22, under the presidency of the Minister of National Education. Among those who will take part will be E. Faral, head of the College de France, Prof. P. Janet, and Prof. H. Pieron, who succeeded Binet as director of the laboratory at the Sorbonne. A jubilee volume, in which many psychologists are collaborating, is to be published in honour of Ribot, Binet and Janet, who were the pioneers of scientific psychology in France in its chief lines of advance, namely, physiological psychology and laboratory investigations, the study of the child, pathological psychology and the study of mental anomalies. The general principle of the comparative method affirmed by Ribot has dominated the development of scientific psychology in France, and has contributed notably to the application to teaching and to industry of the science of the mind. The secretary of the committee responsible for the commemoration is Prof. H. Pieron, College de France, Paris.

Philosophical Approach to Religion

THE sixteenth Unity School was held at Jordans Hostel in Bucks on May 12–15. The general subject was "The Philosophical Approach to Religion", and an address introducing the subject was given by Mr. F. S. Marvin on the evening of May 12, when he reaffirmed his belief in positivism, possibly modified in certain aspects to relate it to certain more recent ideas. In the discussion, Lord Samuel put forward a view involving in one aspect the idea of causality leading to a creator God. On May 13, Dr. Helen Wodehouse, Mistress of Girton, in an address characterized by beauty of expression, introduced the question of what is the philosophical approach to religion. The discussion was opened by Prof. J. H. Muirhead, and the Rev. J. H. Brittain contributed some remarks on the historical element in current religion. Prof. John MacMurray gave a stimulating discourse in opening a session on "Religion as the Basis of Reality" and sought to find the essence of religion in personal relationship. He also made some comments on the differences between the scientific and the religious attitudes ; discussion of this subject was continued on May 14, when Dr. C. H. Desch spoke on the effect of the development of science on religion. In a concluding address on the future prospects of religion, Prof. Harvey considered a number of factors that have to be taken into account, and put forward some tentative conclusions. Though