

NEWS AND VIEWS

Sir George Stapledon, C.B.E., F.R.S.

ALL who are interested in the progress of agricultural science and practice will bear with great satisfaction that the Royal Agricultural Society has awarded its Gold Medal to Sir George Stapledon, professor of agricultural botany and director of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth, for his conspicuous services to agriculture. This follows closely on the knighthood recently conferred upon him and on his election into the Royal Society, and the triple recognition of the good work he has long done for agriculture during a very strenuous life is extremely gratifying. Sir George began his agricultural career at Cirencester, where he early became interested in grassland problems and laid the foundations for the special studies that he has since brilliantly developed. When the plant breeding station was established at Aberystwyth he was put in charge of it and commenced work on the breeding and selection of grasses, clovers and oats. He did not confine himself to the experimental fields, but also undertook wider investigations in grassland management which were greatly developed when the magnificent donation of Sir Julien Cahn enabled the College authorities to acquire a hill farm. In the course of his activities, he has visited Australia and New Zealand and studied grass problems there. At present he is making a survey of the grasslands of Great Britain, and those who have read his books will look forward with interest to the account which it may be hoped will be published when his review is complete. His many friends wish him many years of continued fruitful activity.

Dr. David Fairchild

DR. DAVID FAIRCHILD, veteran plant explorer of the United States Department of Agriculture, has been awarded the Meyer Medal of the American Genetic Association for distinguished services in plant introduction at the Glendale, Maryland, Plant Introduction Station of the United States Department of Agriculture. Dr. Fairchild has been associated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture for fifty years. Through his unflinching interest and enthusiasm, hundreds of new plants have been introduced into America. From this work has grown the date industry in California. The soybean, another introduction resulting from Dr. Fairchild's work, is now an industry worth seventy million dollars. Many of the superior cereals now grown on American farms owe their resistance to disease and their ability to withstand unfavourable weather conditions to plant introductions which have been used in breeding work. A most important recent incident in plant introduction has been the saving of the cantaloupe industry in California which was decimated some years ago by a fungus disease, powdery mildew. A wild variety from India, itself of such poor quality

as to be scarcely edible, was found to be resistant to the mildew. This resistance has been transferred by applied genetic method to excellent new varieties, also resistant. Dr. Fairchild joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture in July 1889, fifty years ago. He established, and was for many years head of, the office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction. During this time he travelled widely through all parts of the world. In 1938 he retired from active service with the Department, but his interest in plants has remained, and in the years following his retirement he has been instrumental in much work with new plants now being carried on in Florida, where he has lived since his retirement.

Prof. Jaroslav Perner

PROF. JAROSLAV PERNER, professor of palaeontology in the Charles University, Prague, has recently celebrated his seventieth birthday. He was born at Tynec on the Labe (Elbe) in 1869 and studied zoology and palaeontology under Profs. Antonin Frič and Otokar Novák. He acted as assistant and later as keeper of the Geological Department at the National Museum, where his chief work was the arranging of Barrande's collections. After Barrande's death, Prof. Perner continued his great treatise "Système Silurien du centre de la Bohême". He described the Gastropoda of the formations included in the system, in three quarto volumes, during the years 1903-1911. Before this, Perner had published four volumes of his important treatise "Études sur les Graptolites de la Bohême" (in Czech) wherein he corrected the old and incorrect accounts of this fauna and laid the basis for the modern stratigraphic division of the Lower Palaeozoic rocks of Bohemia. After the death of Prof. E. Koken of Tübingen in 1912, the Russian Imperial Academy of Science at St. Petersburg asked Mr. Perner to continue Koken's "Gastropoden des baltischen Untersilurs". This Perner did during 1913-1925. In addition he has written a number of scientific articles on Phyllocarida, trilobites, fishes, conodonts and other fossils of the Palaeozoic rocks of his country. These have appeared mainly in the *Journal of the Bohemian Academy of Sciences* or in the *Centralblatt für Geologie*. On the death of Prof. Filip Pošta in 1928, Prof. Perner was appointed professor of palaeontology in the Charles University, and had control of the palaeontological collections at the Geological Institute (under Prof. Radim Kettner). He obtained part of the great Hanus collection, which contained much new and rare material. A new development of his subject has taken place since his appointment, which can be seen from the published work of his pupils. He is a corresponding member of the Palaeontological Society of Washington, a member of the Bohemian Academy of Arts and Sciences, and an honorary member of the Bohemian Royal Society of Sciences.