

## NEWS AND VIEWS

## Royal Society Medal Awards

THE following awards of medals have been made by the president and council of the Royal Society: Copley Medal to Prof. T. H. Morgan, For.Mem.R.S., director of the William G. Kerekhoff Laboratories, California Institute of Technology, for his establishment of the modern science of genetics, which has revolutionized our understanding, not only of heredity, but of the mechanism and nature of evolution; Davy Medal to Prof. J. W. McBain, F.R.S., professor of chemistry in Stanford University, for his distinguished work in the study of colloidal electrolytes, for providing the elements of the guiding theory, and for developing the subject; Hughes Medal to Prof. G. P. Thomson, F.R.S., professor of physics in the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, for his important discoveries in connexion with the diffraction of electrons by matter.

## Engineers in War-time

THAT a special degree of responsibility falls on those called to high office in a professional capacity in time of war was apparent from the presidential address of Sir Clement Hindley to the Institution of Civil Engineers. Instead of devoting himself, as he had intended, to recounting the cultural history and development of the Institution, he found it more appropriate to put before the members the picture he had in mind of the duties now to be taken up by the Institution as a corporate body, and by its members as individuals. The regular forms of its activities being very largely curtailed by the exigencies of war conditions, its first duty lies in the maintenance of high standards, both educational and practical, for the admission of members. This involves an active interest in the education and training of young engineers and, as a matter of immediate concern, in conjunction with the colleges, the adjustment of curricula to war-time conditions. On the Institution, too, is placed the responsibility of seeing that studies are pushed on as far as possible before military service has to be undertaken, and that those with technical training are employed in suitable units. In all this there is the ultimate fact of importance that when the period of reconstruction is reached, Great Britain will need a well-trained and well-equipped body of young engineers.

THE second duty of the Institution is that falling on individual members to contribute their experience and knowledge to the common stock of the profession, in which the part of the Institution will be to publish in the *Journal* such contributions and the correspondence to which they give rise. The third and main function to be conserved is that of giving continued support to those scientific organizations which have undertaken research and investigation

for the Institution. While certain portions of this work have to be suspended, the Research Committee remains in being in order to deal with problems suggested, and the resources of the Institution are held available for any work the Government may consider can best be carried out by its members. Sir Clement's final remarks may be quoted as a message to all engaged in the pursuit of science and its application: "We may be sure that when we have passed through the present ordeals, and have achieved the victory for freedom for which we are now fighting, there will be unimagined opportunities for applying for the benefit of the human race those advances in science which are even now taking place under the stimulus of war. It is necessary for all engineers to continue to keep abreast of developments in engineering science and practice, and so to fit themselves for this great work of the future."

## Fuel Industry in Great Britain

COLONEL W. A. BRISTOW, on his installation as president of the Fuel Luncheon Club, spoke on modern fuel problems. After indicating the cost in foreign exchange of refined oil products and other material such as carbide, silicides, etc., which can be made in Great Britain, he mentioned other products capable of synthesis more or less directly from coal. From the products of the carbonization and gasification of coal he indicated that a great range of chemical products can be made, and, in view of Great Britain's adverse balance of trade, must be made. The obstacle, he said, is not lack of skill, knowledge or courage, but an absence of planning at the centre. Another deterrent is the financial system by which the 'financial whipcrackers' controlling public companies insist on immediate dividends and frown on efforts made in the national interest. He thinks the State should establish a 'Commercial Research Force' not merely for pure research but also to operate plants of capacity and bring processes to fruition. If these ideas are vitally important, it is only logical that the citizen should make his due contribution. There is another reason why an early start should be made in this direction. An effort should be made to prepare for creative work for the young men who return from the war. After the last war, the coal industry passed through tragic years. Moreover, none was more severely hit than the technicians left redundant by the cessation of munition manufacture. This time we should not leave the fate of returning armies to luck, but safeguard the future of the coal, oil and allied industries.

## Projected Antarctic Expedition

A NOVEL feature of the new antarctic expedition which Admiral R. E. Byrd proposes to lead from the United States to the Ross Sea area is the snow cruiser which, according to Science Service, has been designed