

NEWS AND VIEWS

Two Eminent Swedish Chemists

THE year 1840 saw the birth of the two Swedish chemists, Per Theodor Cleve and Lars Fredrik Nilson, the former of whom was born at Stockholm on February 10. Cleve was the son of a merchant, Nilson the son of a farmer of Ostergothland. Both of them became students at the University of Uppsala, where they came under the influence of L. F. Svanberg, who had been the friend of Berzelius. After graduating, and teaching chemistry at Uppsala, Cleve worked in Wurtz's laboratory in Paris, and in the mineralogical laboratory at Stockholm; he then made a geological excursion to the West Indies. After his return home, in 1870 he was given a post at the Stockholm Technical Institute, but on Svanberg's retirement became professor of chemistry at Uppsala and held this position until shortly before his death. Like his contemporary Nilson, he did valuable work on the rare earths, and he showed that scandium, the element discovered by Nilson, was identical with the eka-boron of Mendeléeff. It was partly for his work on the rare earths that he was in 1894 awarded the Davy Medal of the Royal Society. Towards the end of his life he became absorbed in biological studies. For the Chemical Society, of which he was a foreign member, he wrote the memorial lecture on the Swiss chemist J. C. G. de Marignac (1817-94). He died at Uppsala on June 18, 1905.

While Nilson was also known for his investigations on the rare earths, he rendered great service to his country as an agricultural chemist. Farming was in his veins, and he always retained an interest in the prosperity of his native district. After holding the chair of analytical chemistry at Uppsala from 1878 until 1883, he was called to Stockholm as professor of chemistry in the Royal Academy of Agriculture. In the next sixteen years, while engaged, on his official duties, he published nearly sixty papers on soils, manures, etc., and his inquiries led to the draining and cultivation of the swamps of Gothland, and to the introduction of the sugar beet. He was elected a foreign member of the Chemical Society in 1888. He died on May 14, 1899, in his fifty-ninth year.

The Parliamentary and Scientific Committee

A MEETING of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee was held at the House of Commons on January 31. In the absence of the chairman, Captain D. F. Plugge, M.P., the chair was taken by Major H. A. Procter, M.P. The Secretary announced that the following bodies have now definitely agreed to support the new Committee: Association of Scientific Workers, Institute of Chemistry, British Association of Chemists, National Veterinary Medical Association, Institution of Structural Engineers, Institution of

Marine Engineers, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Institution of Mechanical Engineers, Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, Institute of Fuel, Institute of Gas Engineers, Thames Barrage Association, Oil and Colour Chemists Association, Institution of the Rubber Industry, Association of Applied Biologists, Universities Federation for Animal Welfare.

The Secretary also reported that the following Members of Parliament had agreed to become members of the Committee: Captain Plugge, Colonel Baldwin-Webb, Mr. Markham, Mr. E. W. Salt, Mr. Alan Chorlton, Dr. Haden-Guest, Sir John Graham Kerr, Mr. R. R. Stokes, Sir Murray Sueter, Mr. David Adams, Mr. Henry Haslam, Sir Ernest Graham-Little, Major Procter, Mr. Kenneth Pickthorn, Mr. W. Higgs, Mr. R. H. Morgan, Mr. W. R. Duckworth, and Mr. I. C. Hannah. It was agreed to give all possible support to affiliated scientific and technical bodies in ensuring fair treatment for scientific and technical workers in connexion with military service, not only so far as the list of reserved occupations is concerned, but also with the view of ensuring that the special qualifications of scientific and technical workers enrolled in the Fighting Services should be properly appreciated and developed. Discussion also took place on the report of the sub-committee which has been investigating the question of the nutritive value of bread, having regard to the importance of bread as an article of diet in war-time.

Venereal Diseases in War-time

At an extraordinary general meeting of the British Social Hygiene Council, held on January 29, attention was concentrated upon the circular letter recently dispatched by the Ministry of Health to local government authorities relating to the control of venereal disease in war-time. During the War of 1914-18, some 400,000 members of the armed forces were treated for venereal disease, necessitating the withdrawal of the majority of the patients from active service for periods varying between five and six weeks. To-day, the Ministry is anxious that the great reduction in the numbers of people suffering from venereal disease since 1918 should be at least maintained during the social upheavals that are caused by war conditions. The movements of population from towns to the vicinity of munition factories, military camps and aerodromes in the country districts bring grave problems.

In the circular the Ministry of Health emphasizes the need for the maintenance of existing measures for the treatment of the diseases, while, in areas where the services provided are deficient, it is suggested that clinics and personnel should be adequately augmented. The introduction of fully