NEWS AND VIEWS

Waynflete Professor of Physiology, Oxford

ANNOUNCEMENT has been made of the appointment of Dr. E. G. T. Liddell, of Trinity College, Oxford, to the Waynflete chair of physiology in the University of Oxford, which has been vacant since last autumn owing to the death of Prof. J. Mellanby. Dr. Liddell graduated in medicine from Oxford and St. Thomas's Hospital, and returned to the University as assistant in physiology in 1921. He collaborated in much of the later work of Sir Charles Sherrington, including the studies on the stretch reflex, the publication of the "Reflex Activity of the Spinal Cord", and the revised second edition of "Practical Exercises in Mammalian Physiology". He was thus intimately associated with the Sherrington School. His particular interest has naturally been the physiology of the nervous system, and his more independent published papers have been concerned with studies on the knee-jerk, physiology of the cerebellum and spinal cord. He has also published work on the experimental production of high blood pressure in animals. Latterly he has elaborated a technique for study of the postural reactions in the limbs of the intact animal over a long period of time, thus exploring the effects of lesions of the spinal cord and corpus striatum by operative means. He has made himself an authority on this particular branch of the subject, hitherto neglected in Great Britain.

Prof. Liddell was elected fellow of the Royal Society last year. As fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, since 1921, he has gained a wide reputation as tutor and will be greatly missed in this sphere of university life. His long experience as examiner and tutor, his wide interests and thoughtful outlook, all combine to make him unusually well suited to the chair, and we wish him every success.

Guthrie Lecturer of the Physical Society

THE twenty-fourth Guthrie Lecture of the Physical Society will be delivered at 5.30 on February 26 at the Royal Institution by Prof. P. M. S. Blackett, professor of physics in the University of Manchester. The subject of the lecture is "Cosmic Rays: Recent Developments". Prof. Blackett served with the Royal Navy in 1914–19, having previously been at the Royal Naval Colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth. After the War he exchanged a naval for a scientific career and went up to Magdalene College, Cambridge. In the Cavendish Laboratory he began work with the Wilson cloud chamber, a technique of research to which he has remained faithful. His work during 1923–1933 was concerned with the alpha particle. He showed that alpha particles make nuclear collisions in which energy and momentum are very accurately conserved, but he also investigated collisions resulting in nuclear disintegration, and showed, for the first time, that in a Rutherford disintegration of the nitrogen nucleus the alpha particle is absorbed and a proton liberated.

In 1932 Blackett developed the counter-controlled cloud-chamber device—a method of using the cloud chamber in which the expansion is initiated by the passage of the particle to be photographed. This has proved to be a most valuable instrument. This work led immediately to the detailed study of cosmic ray particles; and Blackett and Occhialini found, almost at the same time as Anderson, that positively charged particles of electronic mass occur in the cosmic rays. With Chadwick and Occhialini, Blackett showed the formation of positrons by the passage of hard gamma rays through lead. Since that time Blackett has concentrated almost entirely on the subject of cosmic rays. He has initiated investigations at Cambridge, at London (Birkbeck College) and at Manchester; indeed most of the experimental work on cosmic rays in Great Britain has been inspired by him more or less directly. His own work has been chiefly concerned with the energy spectrum of the particles, which he has investigated by means of a very refined cloud chamber in a strong magnetic field.

Prof. D. R. R. Burt

MR. DAVID R. R. BURT, who has just been made professor of zoology in University College, Colombo, has had charge of his department since 1924, and has raised it from small beginnings to a school of more than a hundred students. Prof. Burt is a graduate of St. Andrews, and was at one time an assistant to Sir D'Arcy Thompson; he also worked under Hans Przibram in Vienna. He has studied, among other things, the very numerous cestode parasites of the Ceylon fauna. Some years ago he devised, and described in NATURE, a method of anatomical injection with rubber-latex which has great advantages and has come into everyday use, especially in America.

Centenary of Sir Hiram Maxim

AMONG the great mechanical inventors of last century, none was known to a wider public than Sir Hiram Maxim, who was born on February 25, a century ago. When he came to Europe in 1881 to attend the Paris Exhibition, he was the engineer of the first electric light company in the United States, but was known to few in Great Britain. He had, however, already taken out a goodly number of patents, had invented a gas-making machine for lighting buildings and had done much original work on the incandescent electric lamp, dynamos, regulators, boiler plant and suchlike. When on the Continent, his attention was attracted to the subject of machine-guns. His countrymen Gatling, Gardner, and Hotchkiss had all invented machine-guns, and so had the Swedish engineer Nordenfelt. None of their guns, however, had proved entirely satisfactory.

In Paris Maxim drew the design of his gun, and his original gun was made in a workshop at 57A Hatton

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