NEWS AND VIEWS

The Linnean Medallist for 1940

SIR ARTHUR SMITH WOODWARD, to whom the Linnean Medal for 1940 of the Linnean Society was presented at the anniversary meeting on May 24, was a student of Prof. Boyd Dawkins in Owens College. He entered the Geological Department of the British Museum in 1882, and spent more than forty years in that institution, retiring as keeper of the Department. Between 1889 and 1901 he published four volumes of a "Catalogue of Fossil Fishes", based on a personal knowledge not only of the splendid collection in the Museum, but also of all other important series preserved in all parts of the world. It is a unique publication, a survey by one man of the whole material of a group which has provided that solid basis on which all our recent advances of knowledge of this subject have been built.

But Sir Arthur's interests spread beyond fossil fish to fossil vertebrates in general, and he is very widely known for his collaboration with the late Mr. Charles Dawson in the discovery and interpretation of the Piltdown skull. It is generally recognized that his original interpretation of the many difficult problems, of the reconstruction of this skull from its fragments, and of its significance in the understanding of human origin, was nearer the truth than any other of the many put forward all over the world shortly after the discovery. Sir Arthur has added to the vast mass of detailed accurate information about the anatomy of fossil vertebrates which necessarily forms the body of his work, a series of most illuminating discussions of the broader aspects of palæontology in their bearing on the mechanism of evolution, which have commonly taken the form of presidential addresses to scientific societies.

Linnean Society: Crisp Medallist

THE Crisp Award and Medal for 1940 of the Linnean Society was presented to Mr. D. J. Scourfield, in recognition of the importance of his paper on "The Oldest Known Fossil Insect", recently read before the Society and summarized on p. 799 of this issue of NATURE. The Award, which was established in 1912 by a donation from the late Sir Frank Crisp, formerly treasurer of the Society, is given "as a reward for the best paper, dealing with microscopical research by a Fellow, published by the Society since the previous award". By the terms of the donation it is given "at intervals of not less than five years" but, actually, the period has generally been much longer. No doubt it has been found difficult to define the type of research that could strictly be termed "microscopical", since there are few branches of biological work which do not require at least the occasional use of the microscope. In the case of Mr. Scourfield's paper, however, no doubt could arise, since it was only his unusual skill and long experience in microscopical manipulation that enabled him to elucidate so convincingly the structure of these minute and obscure fossils from the Rhynie Chert. He had already done the same for another arthropod from the same deposit, the remarkable crustacean Lepidocaris, described in his well-known memoir published by the Royal Society in 1926. The debt that British biology owes to the work of amateur microscopists has often been pointed out. Mr. Scourfield worthily sustains the tradition of a long line of distinguished predecessors.

Linen Industry Research Association: New Director

DR. A. J. TURNER has been appointed director of research of the Linen Industry Research Association in succession to Dr. W. H. Gibson. Since 1931 Dr. Turner has been head of the Spinning Department of the British Cotton Industry Research Association. Prior to that date, he was for six years director of the Technological Laboratory of the Indian Central Cotton Committee, Bombay. He has also held the posts of head of the Experimental Fabrics Section of the Royal Aircraft Establishment and professor of textile technology in the Manchester College of Technology and in the University of Manchester. Dr. Turner takes up his duties at Lambeg, Northern Ireland, on September 1 next.

Fauna and Flora of the Low Countries

THE intense fighting over such a wide area of the Low Countries also threatens to damage fauna and flora of international interest, as in Norway (see NATURE of April 27, p. 663). In Holland there are well-known sanctuaries for seabirds that have attracted photographers from Britain for many years, and the Netherlands Society for the Protection of Birds has done much to preserve the breeding haunts. The sandy island of Texel near the Zuyder Zee is the breeding ground of many former British breeders which have now left their British nesting haunts. The black-tailed godwit is common on the polders, as are nesting ruffs at Wall en Burg polder, avocets, Kentish plovers, a few pairs of black tern nest, and of blue-headed wagtails, icterine and marsh-warblers, Montague's and marsh-harriers and spoon-bills at the inland lake of Muy, garganey, short-eared owls and various commoner species. Texel is preserved under the State Forestry Commission. Another Dutch preserve, the Naardermere, has bitterns, ruffs, black terns and marsh-harriers. In winter the country is a great haunt of wild duck, and 140 duck decoys take 300,000 a year for the canning industry.

In Belgium, the Yser estuary is a reserve for waders, wild-fowl, etc., and there is another wild-fowl sanctuary near Nieuport. These were under the Ministry of Agriculture. Interesting experiments have been made with the successful introduction of