

NEWS AND VIEWS

Agricultural Research Council:

Sir Edwin Butler, C.M.G., C.I.E., F.R.S.

CHARGED as it was with the scientific supervision of the widespread organization for agricultural research which has been developed in Great Britain since 1911 and holding (as many may think unfortunately) but few of the purse strings directly, the policy of the Agricultural Research Council has been to guide and stimulate work in progress at research institutions, rather than to attempt control. As the late Sir William Hardy expressed it, "free" not "directed" research was what it desired to promote. In giving effect to this policy, Sir Edwin Butler proved himself an ideal secretary. An acknowledged leader in his own subject, mycology, he had, as director of institutions in India and Great Britain, gained a wide knowledge of the problems and the methods of the agricultural investigator. He quickly made himself familiar with the work of the research institutes and he visited them frequently. Nor was he ever an unwelcome visitor, since directors and members of staff alike soon found that in him they had a real friend, always ready to interest himself in their problems, always ready with helpful suggestions. To the Council the contacts thus established were invaluable, as were also his detailed descriptive reports. His conclusions could be accepted with confidence; they were marked by proofs of full understanding, careful weighing of evidence and absolute fairness. His personal qualities made him the best of colleagues and it was with great regret that, because of the verdict of his medical advisers, his resignation from the secretaryship was accepted. But this did not come until he had left behind him a permanent memorial of his tenure of office.

When, in 1935, Sir Edwin became its secretary, the Council was searching for a suitable estate on which to establish a field station for experimental work on farm animals; a number of estates was visited and when Compton was seen, Sir Edwin was the first to recognize its possibilities. After it had been acquired its development owed much to him, in particular the fine range of laboratories, and the homes for laboratory animals are largely the result of the care which he, in consultation with Mr. Dunkin, the director, bestowed on the planning of details. Members of Council and others who visit Compton in future must always associate these buildings with the name of Sir Edwin Butler, who watched over their construction from foundation to completion with unceasing care.

Prof. W. W. C. Topley, F.R.S.

PROF. W. W. C. TOPLEY, who now becomes secretary of the Agricultural Research Council, like his predecessor, holds a medical qualification, and like him decided to work for the advancement of science, rather than follow a professional career; but whereas Sir Edwin chose plant pathology as his special subject, it was on science as affecting animal health

that Prof. Topley specialized. His name until now has been so closely associated with bacteriology in relation to human medicine that surprise may be felt by some to find him among the agriculturists. But he does not come among them as a stranger. Since the earliest days of the Agricultural Research Council, Prof. Topley has been a valued member of some of its committees on animal health. In 1939 he became a member of Council and he is chairman of the committee in charge of the particular investigation for which the Compton Field Station was, in the first instance, acquired.

It was with great pleasure that his colleagues learned recently that Prof. W. W. C. Topley was willing to accept the post vacated by Sir Edwin and that his qualities of initiative, drive, clear thinking and direct, convincing manner of speech when advocating a cause in which he believes have now been secured for agriculture. In the uncertain days which lie ahead, it is a comforting thought for all who have the progress of agricultural research at heart to know that as its Secretary the Council has secured the services of a man who has not only made outstanding contributions to science, but has also proved himself to be an inspiring leader of others. It may be that those primarily interested in medicine may regret Prof. Topley's decision, but let them not forget that in recent years it has become increasingly clear that the foundations of human health are deeply laid, that man's physical well-being depends in no small degree on the health of domestic animals, on the properties of cultivated plants, and ultimately indeed on the special characteristics of the soil itself. Medical science will not lose, but gain, by Prof. Topley's transference to the wider field of agricultural science.

Centenary of the Pharmaceutical Society

IN the afternoon of April 15 several hundreds of pharmacists attended a meeting at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, which was held to celebrate the centenary of the Pharmaceutical Society. Mr. Walter Deacon, who presided, introduced Sir John Anderson, Lord President of the Council who, he said, now had many dealings with representatives of the Society at the Home Office and elsewhere. In his address, Sir John said it was fitting that someone with a knowledge of the circumstances of pharmacy extending over thirty years should attend the meeting as a representative of His Majesty's Government to pay tribute to the Society's past achievements and to wish it well for the future. The founders of the Society, he continued, laid down that its main purpose should be to advance chemistry and pharmacy, and the constancy with which their successors had pursued that aim deserved the fullest recognition. Modern developments of medicine have changed completely the work of the pharmacist, and it is right that the public should now know how successful have been the efforts of the Pharmaceutical Society to

keep in line with the advance in knowledge and the great progress of medical science. A play, "Jacob Bell and Some Others", specially written for the occasion by Mr. H. N. Linstead, secretary of the Pharmaceutical Society, and produced by Donald Wolfitt, followed the speeches. It brought vividly to the large audience episodes associated with the Society's foundation.

Haricot Beans

At the request of the Ministry of Agriculture the Imperial Bureau of Horticulture and Plantation Crops, East Malling, has issued a bulletin compiled by G. St. Clair Feilden, on haricot beans (Occasional Paper No. 6. 1s.). Hitherto cheap supplies of beans from North America, Japan and Hungary have discouraged farmers in the United Kingdom from embarking on a crop that proves only fully successful in a dry summer. In war-time, however, it seemed advisable to re-examine the possibility of providing such a valuable addition to the nation's food, and yields of one ton or more per acre were obtained in trials made in 1940. The bulletin contains a brief account of work with haricots in the United States and Canada and of the results of experiments in England at various centres. Cultivation is outlined and harvesting and cooking methods are described. The varieties at present available, though they did well in England in 1940, are really more suited to warmer and drier climates, and it is to be hoped that some growers will become sufficiently interested to hybridize and select strains that are more dependable to ripen a full crop in Great Britain.

War Fellings and Insect Pests

In the *Scottish Forestry Journal* (54, Pt. 2, Oct. 1940), Dr. A. E. Cameron, of the Department of Entomology, University of Edinburgh, writes on "The Effect of Felling on the Incidence of Forest Insect Pests". The many fellings throughout Britain during the War of 1914-18 and the remnants left on the ground for several years thereafter were the breeding places of large numbers of some of the more dangerous of our insect pests, which afterwards spread destruction in young, middle-aged, and old woods throughout the country. Once again we are faced with a similar emergency, and the same aftermath of the fellings is to be seen on many a site of a former wood, now felled for war purposes. The insect pest question, as Dr. Cameron says, is likely to be acute in the near future unless attention is given to it, and some effort made to counter its possible or certain virulence. The author practically confines himself to conifers and their chief pests. But in parts of Great Britain there is an equal danger to some of the valuable hardwoods, including oak, ash and elm, to mention three only. But since the major part of the afforestation work of the Forestry Commission is connected with the conifers, the question of this possible insect danger is greater now than it was in 1918, when there was a comparatively small area of young conifer plantations in the country.

Dr. Cameron deals with the different types of forest and their respective immunity or otherwise. He says that our only indigenous conifer, the Scots pine, is the most subject to attack by several species, but that the other conifers, exotics, such as spruce, Douglas fir and larch are subject. The chief dangerous pests are the weevils, *Hylobius abietis*, *Pissodes notatus* and *P. pini*, and the pine beetles, *Myelophilus piniperda* and *M. minor*, *Hylastes ater* and *Pityogenes bidentatus*. In order to combat these pests, Dr. Cameron states that their habits must be known intimately; and then some measures of control which he details may be instituted.

Anthropological Observations in New Guinea

INFORMATION relating to the work of an expedition of anthropological, ethnographical and linguistic investigation in the little-known north-eastern region of New Guinea under the leadership of Dr. Georg Höltker is given by Dr. Otto Schlaginhaufen in the current issue of the bulletin of the Swiss Anthropological and Ethnographical Society (*Bull. Schw. Gesell. f. Anthropol. u. Ethnol.*, 16, 1940). The expedition, which had recently returned at the time of writing, was in the field for the three years 1936-39. Its operations covered the coastal region south-eastwards from the mouth of the Sepik River, and the coastal and inland territory on the east side of the lower waters of the Ramu River, and country in the basin of the Mbur, a tributary of the Ramu, as well as islands of the coast including Manam and Dampier. Of the peoples under investigation by the expedition a proportion were classifiable linguistically as belonging to the Melanesian stock, but the greater number were Papuan. Anthropological observations were made by Dr. Höltker on members of the former group on the mainland—Sepa and Wanami living to the south of the coastal peoples of Monumbo (Potsdamhaven) and on the islands. The Papuan group examined included the Bosgung on the Mbur, Watum to the south of the Sepik and among inland peoples, Tanggum, Ariaw, Mikarew, Dinam and Akekom. Observations were made on 1,685 individuals, both adults and children.

Earthquake in Mexico

A SEVERE earthquake shook more than 20,000 square miles of territory in northern Mexico on April 15, causing much damage to property, and, it is feared, a heavy death toll. Full details are as yet lacking, but preliminary facts may be given. The States most affected were Aguascalientes, Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Mexico, Michoacan, Puebla and Tlaxcala, the isoseismals apparently being elongated in an east-west direction. The epicentre may have been in the neighbourhood of Chilpancingo, though very great damage was done to the city of Colima, capital of the State of Colima, 275 miles west of Mexico City. In Colima the homes of approximately 10,000 people have been reported destroyed. There were damage and loss of life also at other towns, including Guadalajara and Manzanillo, and as far east as Maltrata in the State of Vera Cruz. Mexico