

La Cour did much by example, precept and international intercourse to promote the improvement and extension of magnetic observations, and the inter-comparison of magnetic standards. I was privileged in 1936 to accompany him on a tour with this object, to magnetic observatories and institutes in Sweden, Finland and Russia; he was a most kind, courteous and agreeable companion.

He was a tremendous worker, and was remarkable also for his capacity to inspire others with the same ardour, to an extent that perhaps sometimes surprised even themselves. His manner and his dignified movements suggested calm, irresistible strength.

La Cour was married and had one son and four daughters, who with Mrs. la Cour survive him. On his international journeys he was often accompanied by one or more members of his family, and in consequence there are many countries in which a personal sympathy with his family will be felt in their and our loss.

S. CHAPMAN.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. J. C. Arthur, emeritus professor of botany since 1915 at Purdue University, and president in 1902 and 1919 of the Botanical Society of America, known for his work on the plant rusts, on April 30, aged ninety-two.

Mr. F. C. Baker, curator emeritus of the Museum of Natural History of the University of Illinois, corresponding member of the Zoological Society of London, on May 7, at the age of seventy-four years.

Dr. G. B. Batten, a pioneer of X-ray treatment, who was president during 1918 of the Röntgen Society, on July 9, aged eighty-one.

Dr. Charles R. Keyes, consulting mining engineer, founder and editor of the *Pan-American Geologist*, on May 18, aged seventy-seven.

Dr. M. W. Lyon, jun., pathologist of the Clinic, South Bend, Indiana, and president during 1931-33 of the American Society of Mammologists, on May 19, aged sixty-seven.

NEWS and VIEWS

Charles Blacker Vignoles and the Royal Society

AT a meeting of the Royal Society on July 16, a gold snuff-box, once the property of Charles Blacker Vignoles, F.R.S. (1793-1875), was presented to the Society by his grandsons, Mr. E. B. Vignoles and Lieut.-Colonel W. A. Vignoles. Mr. Vignoles, in making the presentation, referred to the fact that in 1841 C. B. Vignoles presented to the Royal Society a fine portrait of Sir Isaac Newton, which had come to him as the result of a connexion between his mother's family and that of Sir Isaac. Mr. Vignoles said that his grandfather, who was of Huguenot descent, came of a long line of soldiers and was an orphan and a prisoner in French hands at the age of thirteen months. He was educated by his maternal grandfather, Dr. Charles Hutton, F.R.S., the mathematician, the author of "Hutton's Logarithms", in the preparation of which Vignoles assisted. As a young man he served for a time in the Army, taking part in the disastrous attack on Bergen-op-Zoom in 1814. Following the peace after Waterloo, he went to America, where he was engaged on survey work in South Carolina and Florida, then very little known. Returning to England in 1823 he was soon engaged in railway engineering, almost his first work being the first survey for the proposed Liverpool and Manchester Railway. In the course of a long career he carried out important work at home and abroad as a railway and civil engineer, including the great suspension bridge over the Dnieper at Kieff and a railway through the Cantabrian Pyrenees from Bilbao to Tudela, which with its sharp curves and bold moving of a river, struck a new note in railway engineering. The 'Vignoles rail', the flat-bottomed rail of his design still used all over the world, keeps his name familiar to railway engineers. Vignoles was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1855 and was president of the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1870-71.

The snuff-box, now presented to the Royal Society, was given to Vignoles by the King of Württemberg, in 1844, as a mark of his esteem, after Vignoles had advised the King on plans for the railways of the State. The snuff-box is of solid gold with a portrait

of the King set in diamonds on the lid; inside the lid is an inscription in French giving the circumstances of the presentation and signed by Goes, Secretary of State of Württemberg.

Social Medicine at Oxford

THE Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, with the approval of Lord Nuffield, is to devote £10,000 a year for ten years to the creation in the University of Oxford of a University professorship of social medicine, and the foundation of an institute in which the professor will work. The purposes of the institute are: "To investigate the influence of social, genetic, environmental, and domestic factors on the incidence of human disease and disability. To seek and promote measures, other than those usually employed in the practice of remedial medicine, for the protection of the individual and of the community against such forces as interfere with the full development and maintenance of man's mental and physical capacity. If required by the university to do so, to make provision in the institute for the instruction in Social Medicine of students and practitioners of medicine approved by the Board of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Oxford."

Scientific Men in War-time

A DEPUTATION arranged by the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee saw Mr. R. A. Butler, president of the Board of Education and chairman of the War Cabinet Scientific Advisory Committee, who was accompanied by Prof. A. V. Hill, on July 16, to urge the Government to set up a full-time scientific and technical joint board. This would have as its aim the fullest strategic use of scientific man-power and resources and the proper organization and exchange of scientific and technical information relating to the war effort. The deputation included Lord Hinchinbrooke, Lord Leverhulme, Lord Pentland, Lord Samuel, Sir Lawrence Bragg, Capt. L. Plugge, Prof. B. W. Holman, Dr. W. Wooldridge, Mr. J. H. Wootton-Davies, and representatives of the British Association of Chemists, Institute of Physics, Institute of Struc-