

NEWS and VIEWS

Electrical Engineering at Birmingham : Prof. D. M. Robinson

THE chair of electrical engineering at the University of Birmingham has been filled by the appointment of Dr. Denis M. Robinson. Prof. Robinson, who is in his fortieth year, graduated as B.Sc.(Eng.) at King's College, London, in 1928 ; he was awarded the degree of Ph.D. of London in 1930, and had industrial training at Siemens and Metropolitan-Vickers. During 1929-31 he was a research student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, publishing a paper on "Unpolarised Resistivity of Glass". During 1931-35 he held a research appointment with Callender's Cables, Ltd., his work being published in 1935 as a monograph entitled "High Voltage Cables". Later he held a research appointment in television engineering, an experience which led to his being taken into the Air Ministry in December 1939, where he is working in the Tele-communication Research Establishment. His service, which involves frequent visits to the United States, has been connected with developments of new discoveries and the putting of these into production. He has thus been brought into contact with all the important electrical engineering firms controlling new developments. Prof. Robinson is therefore exceptionally qualified to effect the union of fundamental advances in physics with the established branches of electrical engineering.

Bank of England Trust Fund for Research in Economics

To mark the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Bank of England, the Court of Directors has decided to establish a trust fund with a capital of £100,000 for the promotion of economic research. The fund will be known as the Houbllon-Norman Fund, after Sir John Houbllon, the first governor of the Bank in 1694, and Mr. Montagu Norman, who retired recently after holding the office of governor for twenty-four years. The income of the fund will be used to award fellowships, probably three a year, to be known as Houbllon-Norman Fellowships, for the promotion of research into the working and function of financial and business institutions in Great Britain and elsewhere and the economic conditions affecting them. Grants may also be made toward the expenses of research already in being and to facilitate publication.

Although the Bank of England will follow with interest the activities of the trust, the management of the trust will be independent of the Bank, the first trustees being the deputy governor (Mr. B. G. Catterns), Lord Eustace Percy and Mr. Samuel Courtauld. In making awards the trustees will be assisted by an expert committee, the first members of which will be Mr. Henry Clay, warden-elect of Nuffield College, Oxford, economic adviser to the Bank of England, and previously professor of social economics in the University of Manchester ; Sir Hubert Henderson, recently elected professor of political economy in the University of Oxford, now serving as economic adviser to his Majesty's Treasury ; and Prof. A. M. Carr-Saunders, director of the London School of Economics and formerly professor of social science in the University of Liverpool. The trustees will announce in due course when they are open to receive applications for fellowships.

Distribution of Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) in Great Britain

THE Biology War Committee has been requested by the Agricultural Research Council to collect information and afterwards to plan sample surveys of the distribution of the spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*) in Great Britain. This scheme is part of the general research programme into the biology of the bean aphid (*Aphis fabae* (*A. runicis*)) which overwinters on this plant. The damage done by the bean aphid to the sugar-beet crop alone is estimated to reach a million pounds in some seasons, and proper knowledge of the distribution of its primary winter host is essential in any consideration of the problems of control. The Committee therefore asks for the following information from anyone able to supply it : (1) The exact location (reference one inch or six inch map if possible) of areas which can be put in the following categories : (i) spindle totally absent ; (ii) spindle rare or occasional (isolated bushes 1-2 plants per square mile) ; (iii) spindle frequent (intermediate density between (ii) and (iv)) ; (iv) spindle unusually abundant (at least a hundred bushes per acre or ten plants per 100 yards of hedgerow) ; (data for *Euonymus* spp. in gardens should not be included). (2) The proportion by area which falls into each of the four foregoing categories of density. (3) The differences in (a) geological formation, (b) soil, (c) drainage, (d) altitude, (e) aspect, (f) other factors, which might influence the distribution of spindle. Such information should be sent before August 31 to Mr. G. E. Blackman, Hon. Secretary, Biology War Committee, Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, S.W.7.

Scientific Books and Papers for China

THROUGH the Cultural Scientific Mission to China of the British Council, British men of science have learned of the great difficulties under which their Chinese colleagues are labouring to-day. Of the many obstacles to the pursuit of science in war-time China, not the least important is the scarcity of standard text- and reference books, and journals and reprints, which, equally with technical apparatus, are necessary for scientific teaching and research. The Natural Science Society of China (British Branch), through its president, Dr. S. P. Chu, and honorary secretary, Mr. P. M. Yap, is appealing for scientific and technological publications, which readers of *Nature*, either individually, or as organizations, can spare, to be sent to China. The great majority of Chinese scientific workers are accustomed to English texts and literature ; indeed, many of them have obtained a part or the whole of their training in Great Britain, and the response to this appeal will be of significance, not merely as an expression of comradeship between British and Chinese scientific workers, but also as a constructive effort towards rehabilitating science in Free China. The British Council, 3 Hanover Street, London, W.1, has offered to receive on behalf of the Society such scientific literature as may be available ; and it will be dispatched as opportunity offers to the Science Library of the Natural Science Society of China in Chungking.

Determination of Distance by Radio

THE issues of the *Journal of the Franklin Institute* of January and February 1944 contain an article by C. D. Tuska entitled "Historical Notes on the Determination of Distance by Timed Radio Waves". This

article traces the historical development of methods of measuring distance by means of radio waves using both the frequency modulation and amplitude modulation or pulse methods. It is now about twenty years since the classical experiments of Appleton and Barnett provided a direct measurement of the height of the reflecting layer in the ionosphere using the frequency variation method; while, shortly afterwards, Breit and Ture demonstrated the use of short trains of waves of about one millisecond in length for making the same type of measurement. Many variations and improvements on these two methods have been made from time to time by those engaged in studying the properties of the ionosphere as a medium for reflecting radio waves back to the earth's surface. Methods based on the same principles have also been used for determining the altitude of aeroplanes by reflecting waves from the ground beneath. The article referred to above describes briefly the various methods which have been devised to meet these applications by the aid of a review of the published scientific literature, and especially of the publications of the United States Patent Office for the past ten years or so. As the author states, the notes are necessarily incomplete for the war period, on account of the scarcity of publications for security reasons. The bibliography of eighty-one references appended to the article may, however, be useful to those concerned with tracing the historical development of a comparatively modern application of radio science.

Institute of Ophthalmology at the Royal Eye Hospital

THE immense clinical material and the considerable research activities at the Royal Eye Hospital have prompted the Council of the Hospital to initiate the establishment of an Institute of Ophthalmology, where teaching and research can be carried out systematically and co-ordinated with the work of laboratories and of other ophthalmic and of general hospitals. The Institute will have an independent Board of Governors; and panels of scientific, medical, surgical and ophthalmic advisers have been set up to help in planning and carrying out the work. The Institute will be open to all ophthalmologists, and offers of co-operation will be welcomed.

Beit Memorial Fellowships for Medical Research

THE following elections have been made to Beit Memorial Fellowships for Medical Research, with permission for each fellow to be seconded at any time for war duties: *Fourth Year Fellowships* (£500 a year): Dr. W. Holmes, to continue the study of the regeneration of nerve fibres after injury (Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy, University Museum, Oxford); Dr. Mary F. Lockett, to continue the study of renal pressor substances responsible for experimental high blood pressure (Pharmacology Laboratory, Cambridge). *Junior Fellowships* (£400 a year): Dr. J. C. Boursnell, to study the fate and functions of trace and some other elements in the animal body, using radioactive isotopes (Department of Biochemistry and Chemistry, Medical College of St. Bartholomew's Hospital); Dr. G. A. Levvy, to study the adaptive enzymes in the animal body with special reference to the role of glucuronidase in the metabolism of steroid hormones and related substances (Department of Biochemistry, University of Edinburgh);

Dr. H. J. Rogers, to study the biochemistry of hyaluronidase obtained from various sources, and the role of enzymes such as hyaluronidase and lecithinase and other bacterial antigens in infection (Lister Institute, Elstree, Herts); Dr. G. J. Romanes, to study the relationship between the developing mesoderm and the motor apparatus of the spinal cord supplying it (Department of Anatomy, University of Cambridge); Dr. F. Sanger, to study the chemical structure of proteins with special reference to insulin (Sir William Dunn Institute of Biochemistry, Cambridge); Miss S. P. V. Sherlock, to study the hepatic function in disease by biopsy methods (Department of Medicine, British Postgraduate Medical School); Dr. Charity Waymouth, to study the factors influencing tissue growth *in vitro* (Physiology Department, University of Aberdeen); Mr. E. C. Webb, to study the ultimate mode of action of drugs and poisons in living tissues (Sir William Dunn Institute of Biochemistry, Cambridge).

The Trustees, in their annual report for the year 1943-44, refer to the election this year of Prof. G. F. Marrian, professor of biochemistry in the University of Edinburgh (fellow 1917-20), to the fellowship of the Royal Society. They accepted with great regret the resignation of Prof. T. R. Elliott, who has been secretary to the Advisory Board since 1930, and whose experience and wisdom had been of inestimable value; his place on the Board has been taken by Sir Thomas Lewis, and Dr. A. N. Drury, director of the Lister Institute, has been appointed acting secretary.

Announcements

DR. NORMAN ALLEN, of the Research and Development Laboratory of the Mond Nickel Company, Ltd., has been appointed superintendent of the Metallurgy Division at the National Physical Laboratory. He will take up his duties on September 1, 1944.

THE honorary degree of doctor of science has been conferred by Columbia University, New York, on Dr. L. J. Briggs, director of the U.S. Bureau of Standards, and Te-Pang Hou, who was trained first in China and afterwards in the United States, and eventually established in China a modern chemical work.

THE Royal Institution has established nine graduate memberships, three of which will be awarded annually to recent graduates, of either sex, of any university in the British Empire who have taken a degree with either first or second class honours in any scientific subject. The membership will give the holder the full privileges of members of the Royal Institution for a period of three years, with the exception of the right to attend or vote at any meeting of the members. The first three graduate memberships will be awarded about November 1944 to students who have graduated in 1944. Application forms can be obtained from the General Secretary, Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, London, W.1.

ERRATUM. In the communication "Fluorine-like Action of Various Substances on the Teeth" by Prof. J. T. Irving, in *Nature* of July 29, last paragraph but one (p. 150), line 17, the word "not" should be omitted, and the phrase should read ". . . the other substances here examined also act only by altering the composition of the blood . . ."