complete that it is now almost forgotten that the change was largely due to his researches. Otherwise he refused to spare time for routine discussions at medical societies, for he had no wish to stay fixed on a summit as an acknowledged heart specialist. Independence had been given to him by that intensely important move of the Medical Research Council when it led the way in creating whole-time posts for clinical research, and so he could go wherever his genius beckoned. With his amazingly clear and penetrating intellect he was the mainstay of scientific progress in all departments of his medical school at University College Hospital. Young or old, but especially the former, found him eager and ready to help them. He had the devotion of a zealot to his cause, but a devotion that had no self-seeking or personal conceit to mar it. And work was not all. There was time for pleasures of the countryside, a garden, trout fishing, and especially watching the wild birds that he knew so intimately and photographed with such artistry. Friendships, not readily accepted but staunchly held, also played their part; but chief of all was his happiness in married life.

T. R. ELLIOTT.

Mr. W. E. Nicholson

WILLIAM EDWARD NICHOLSON, who died at Mullion, Cornwall, on February 13, was, after his life-long friend, H. N. Dixon, the best known authority in Great Britain on the taxonomy of the bryophytes. He was interested particularly in the European mosses and in European and exotic hepatics.

By profession a solicitor, Nicholson was born in 1866 at Lewes, Sussex, where almost the whole of his life was spent. He was educated at Marlborough until ill-health compelled him to leave at an early age. From boyhood he was deeply interested in natural history, and until middle life as much in entomology as in botany. Towards the end of the last century, Nicholson began the study of the mosses and liverworts, receiving help and encouragement from William Mitten, the veteran Sussex bryologist and the greatest authority on the exotic mosses of his day. Later he came into contact with H. N. Dixon, and the two soon gained an international reputation for a number of remarkable additions to the European flora made on journeys ranging from southern Portugal to Tornean Lapland.

Though without a scientific training, Nicholson had a keenly critical mind and abnormally acute powers of observation, which were strikingly shown by the extraordinarily large number of species he was able to discover in his native Sussex, including many of the minute and elusive species of *Cephaloziella*.

Nicholson wrote a number of short papers on British and foreign bryophytes, among which his papers on the mosses and liverworts of Sussex were particularly noteworthy. In his later years most of his time was devoted to exotic hepatics, and his most important work in this field was his account of the Chinese collections of the Freiherr von Handel-Mazzetti published in *Symbolae Sinicae* in 1930.

Besides botany, Nicholson's chief interest was in archæology, and he was for fourteen years secretary of the Sussex Archæological Society.

P. W. RICHARDS.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Dr. Denis Coffey, formerly president of University College, Dublin, and vice-chancellor of the National University of Ireland, on April 3, aged seventy-nine.

Sir Ambrose Fleming, F.R.S., on April 18, aged eighty-five.

Mr. A. R. Hinks, F.R.S., C.B.E., secretary of the Royal Geographical Society since 1915, on April 14, aged seventy-one.

Dr. Bohuslav Vrbenský, a Czechoslovak medical man, who held office as Minister of Health and Minister of Public Works in several Governments, and in particular was instrumental in securing improved working conditions for Czechoslovak miners, on November 25, 1944, aged sixty-two.

NEWS and VIEWS

Pure Mathematics at Cambridge: Prof. L. J. Mordell, F.R.S.

THE election of Prof. L. J. Mordell as successor to Prof. G. H. Hardy in the Sadleirian chair of pure mathematics at Cambridge will not have come as a surprise to those who are aware of his international reputation as a leading British mathematician. His main interest has always been in the theory of numbers, and to this subject he has made perhaps as great an original contribution as any mathematician in Britain, past or present. Among outstanding achievements one may mention (1) the proof that all rational solutions of a cubic equation $f(x,y) = 0$ can be derived by a well-known rational process from a finite number of them (Mordell's finite basis theorem), (2) his work on the representation of a number as a sum of squares, which has its root in Mordell's mastery of the theory of modular functions, (3) his work, mostly in recent years, on the geometry of numbers, where he has opened up new avenues of investigation. Characteristic of Mordell's work is the *significance* of the problems he has formulated and attacked. The advances he has made, apart from their intrinsic importance, have often been the starting point for work by other distinguished mathematicians.

Mordell went from Philadelphia to St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1907 with a senior scholarship in mathematics awarded on the scholarship examination of December 1906. He was third wrangler in the 1909 Tripos. After being lecturer at Birkbeck College, London, he went to Manchester, where he has been Fielden professor of pure mathematics since 1923. In 1941 he was awarded the De Morgan Medal of the London Mathematical Society (of which he is now president). From about 1933 onwards, Mordell gathered round himself at Manchester a group of mathematicians from all over the world, whose interests were mainly in number-theory. The success of the 'Manchester school' in original work owed everything to the fertility of Mordell's suggestions, to the keen interest and zest with which he followed their discoveries (even the least significant),