

Birth presented no really considerable difficulty. There were, however, no traces of obscurantism in his composition, and in his greatest contribution to the study of Greek philosophy, his magnificent "Commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*", he lavished his powers in seven hundred closely printed pages upon the enigmatic science of that enigmatic dialogue at least as much as upon its equally enigmatic theology, with perhaps too great a profusion of modern analogues but at any rate with a stimulating largeness and infectious ardour that will long survive him.

J. LAIRD.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Mr. J. B. Butler Burke, sometime lecturer and Berkeley fellow at Owens College, Manchester, known for his books on the origin of life, on January 14, aged seventy-two.

Dr. M. Nierenstein, reader in biochemistry in the University of Bristol, on January 24, aged sixty-eight.

Dame Ethel Shakespear, D.B.E., known for her geological and palaeontological work, on January 17, aged seventy-four.

Dr. Ernest Warren, formerly director of the Natal Museum, on January 29, aged seventy-four.

## NEWS and VIEWS

### The Great Sunspot and Magnetic Disturbance

A CONSIDERABLE magnetic disturbance in the earth's magnetic field was recorded at the Royal Observatory's Magnetic Station at Abinger on February 7-8. This 'magnetic storm' began abruptly at 10h. 20m. G.M.T. on February 7 and lasted for about 36 hours. It was accompanied by a display of the aurora borealis, obscured in the southern part of Britain by cloud. The ranges of the magnetic elements were:  $1.3^\circ$  in declination; more than 500 $\gamma$  in horizontal force and nearly 400 $\gamma$  in vertical force. The storm was remarkable more for the agitation of the traces rather than for the ranges, which have been exceeded on seven or eight other occasions during the last 11-year solar cycle, 1934-44. This magnetic storm is, with little doubt, related to localized solar phenomena of which the great spot was a notable representative (see *Nature* of Feb. 9, p. 155). At the onset of the storm, the spot group was about 1.9 days ( $= 25^\circ$  of solar longitude) past the central meridian. This position of a big spot when a great magnetic storm begins is in general accord with previous statistical results such as those given by Maunder forty years ago.

Solar observations, if available from the United States, India and elsewhere, must be collated and compared with data of radio fade-outs. Reports of fade-outs from Cable and Wireless, Ltd., indicate with a high degree of probability that two intense solar flares occurred on February 6, the day preceding the magnetic storm. The G.M.T. of these fade-outs (03h. 30m., 06h. 20m. and 16h. 15m.-18h. 30m. approximately) precluded solar observations being made in England while these fade-outs were in progress.

### Radio-Frequency Energy from the Sun

REPORTS recently circulated in the daily Press to the effect that scientific workers from the Radio-physics Laboratory in Sydney had been successful in receiving radar echoes from the sun and moon are stated by the Laboratory to be completely without foundation. No attempt to establish such contact has been made by the Laboratory. A recent letter from Pawsey, Payne-Scott and McCreedy, of the Radio-physics Laboratory, Sydney, published in *Nature* of February 9, 1946, reports, however, that 'noises' have been received from the sun as suggested by Appleton (*Nature*, 156, 534, November 3, 1945); calculations of the apparent temperature have been made and correlation with sunspot activity observed. The Press reports referred to above seem to have been due to a misunderstanding of this work.

### Sorby Fellowship: Dr. W. S. Bullough

THE Royal Society has appointed Dr. W. S. Bullough, lecturer in zoology at McGill University, Montreal, to be Sorby research fellow in the University of Sheffield in succession to Dr. K. Mellanby. Dr. Bullough is a graduate of the University of Leeds. While holding first a research fellowship and later a lectureship in the Department of Zoology there, Dr. Bullough carried out investigations on the internal and external environmental control of reproductive cycles in fishes, birds and mammals. His researches on the endocrine glands in relation to bird behaviour throw much light on the reality of the distinction between British and Continental races of starlings, and evidence has been adduced for regarding Continental immigrant starlings as carriers of foot and mouth disease, responsible for outbreaks in British cattle. An important conclusion arising from his work on mammals is the power of the oestrogens to stimulate cells in the ovary to mitotic activity, thus leading at the post-ovulation period to a replenishment of the ovary with a new stock of oogonia. This mitogenic function of the sex hormones would seem to be the field of research now to be explored by Dr. Bullough in his tenure of the Sorby fellowship in the Department of Zoology at Sheffield. He hopes to take up his new work during the summer.

### Chair of Medicine at Sheffield: Dr. C. H. Stuart-Harris

As a result of the recommendations of the Inter-departmental Committee on Medical Schools appointed in 1942 under the chairmanship of Sir William Goodenough, Government grants have made possible the establishment of full-time university professorships in medicine, surgery, midwifery and other branches of clinical medicine, and for the proper staffing of the corresponding departments.

At Sheffield, the University, as a first step, has established a full-time chair of medicine, and Dr. C. H. Stuart-Harris has been appointed as the first occupant. Dr. Stuart-Harris was a student at St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School, London. After various resident hospital posts he held a number of important clinical research scholarships and fellowships, including a Rockefeller travelling fellowship and later the Foulerton research fellowship of the Royal Society, and he has had important experience in clinical teaching in the Department of Medicine of the British Postgraduate Medical School. Throughout the War he served with the Army Medical Services. He is the author of numerous publications embodying the results of clinical and