

NEWS and VIEWS

Prof. Carl Størmer

On May 20 the University of Oxford conferred the degree of D.Sc., *honoris causa*, upon Prof. Carl Størmer, who later on the same day delivered the Halley Lecture on "Polar Aurora in Southern Norway". The presentation speech by the Public Orator at the degree ceremony was in Latin elegiac verse, with a prose addendum which included the remark that Prof. Størmer richly deserved a gown equally worthy of the Goddess of Dawn and the Goddess of Learning. The verse described an imaginary interview between the Public Orator and the Goddess Aurora, who was visible (so it seemed) in the northern skies at night during the recent hard weather, and appeared to have deserted her usual haunts and her husband Tithonus. Aurora bade the Orator to improve his knowledge of celestial phenomena (and his opinion of her) by consulting the eminent Norwegian astrophysicist Prof. Størmer, whose pride it was to have mastered the nature of her counterfeit, the Aurora Polaris, determining the situation, form, motion and spectrum of this phenomenon. He could also speak with authority on the 'mother of pearl' clouds high in the stratosphere, and in addition had long studied the motion of charged particles arriving at the earth from the sun.

Prof. Størmer, now emeritus professor of pure mathematics at the University of Oslo, besides making distinguished contributions to that subject, and applying it to the study of the motion of charged particles in the earth's magnetic field, thus explaining many remarkable observed characteristics of the Aurora Polaris, has for more than a third of a century been the foremost leader and organiser of auroral observation by simultaneous photography from two or more well separated stations in Norway. This work has brought a rich harvest of increased knowledge of the Aurora Polaris, presenting a fascinating set of problems for theoretical geophysicists. As by-products of his observing organisation, Prof. Størmer has also made important additions to our knowledge of 'mother of pearl' clouds and of winds in the upper atmosphere, as indicated both by such clouds and by meteor trails.

British Rubber Producers' Research Association:
Dr. Geoffrey Gee

DR. GEOFFREY GEE, who has recently been appointed director of the British Rubber Producers' Research Association's extensive laboratories at Welwyn, has made important contributions to our knowledge and understanding of the properties of long-chain polymers, especially rubber. His early work at Cambridge dealt with the kinetics of polymerization reactions both in bulk and at interfaces. More recently, he has undertaken a critical examination of the thermodynamics and statistical mechanics of systems involving rubber and related polymers. The last decade has witnessed striking advances in the mathematical treatment of the behaviour of long-chain molecules, but there has been a dearth of exact experimental data, thus precluding any development of the statistical mechanical treatment. Dr. Gee with his collaborators has been able to provide reliable and extensive experimental data which have permitted them in turn to make advances in the theoretical treatment. The determination of the

molecular weights of rubbers and the inter-relationship of the different methods; the connexion between the heats of mixing of rubber and liquids and their cohesive energy densities constitute two of the more important sections of his work.

Sir Edwin Ray Lankester (1847-1929)

THE greatest morphologist of his generation, Sir Edwin Ray Lankester was born a century ago, on May 15, 1847. He was the son of a medical man, he taught medical students, and throughout his career delighted in making zoology serve medicine. When he graduated at Oxford in 1870, biology was still regarded as an apauage of medicine. Those desirous of devoting their lives to the pursuit of comparative anatomy, zoology or physiology had to seek a post at a medical school. It was Huxley who urged budding biologists to seek out independent paths for themselves. In 1874, Ray Lankester, then aged twenty-seven, was appointed to the Jodrell chair of zoology at University College, London. In 1891 he became Linacre professor of comparative anatomy at Oxford, returning to London two years later to succeed Sir William Flower as director of the British Museum (Natural History). On his retirement at the age of sixty he was created K.C.B. A tireless worker and a prolific writer, Ray Lankester's individual contributions to zoology were numerous and distinguished; yet he was at home in almost all fields of biological knowledge. A massive yet nimble mind dwelt in a massive frame. Impatient, utterly fearless, sociable, charming, with a deep booming voice, Ray Lankester was one of the most brilliant and imaginative lecturers in British science. He died on August 15, 1929.

Linnean Society of London: Anniversary Meeting

At the anniversary meeting of the Linnean Society of London held on May 24, the president, Prof. G. R. de Beer, announced that a message of congratulation had been addressed to H.M. Queen Mary, honorary member of the Society, on the occasion of her eightieth birthday, and that H.R.H. the Princess Elizabeth had been pleased to accept the honorary membership of the Society. He delivered a presidential address on "How Animals Hold Their Heads". The Linnean Gold Medal was awarded to Prof. Maurice Caullery, of Paris, who was present to receive it. The following were elected officers for the session 1947-48: *President*, Prof. G. R. de Beer; *Treasurer*, Colonel F. C. Stern; *Secretaries*, Dr. Malcolm A. Smith (Zoology) and Dr. B. Barnes (Botany). The new Members of Council were Prof. G. D. Hale Carpenter, Mrs. Vera Higgins, Mr. E. W. Mason, Dr. W. E. Swinton and Dr. George Taylor. The following were elected foreign members: Prof. A. Chevalier, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris; Prof. C. M. Child, University of Chicago; Prof. E. Fischer-Piette, Laboratoire de Malacologie, Paris; Prof. E. Hultén, Natural History Museum, Stockholm; Dr. G. G. Simpson, American Museum of Natural History, New York. In addition, W. G. Mackenzie, curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, and A. W. Stelfox, of the National Museum of Ireland, were elected associates *honoris causa* of the Society. During the proceedings a film entitled "The Development of the Sperm Cells of the Grasshopper" was shown, with a commentary by Dr. C. D. Darlington.