

NEWS and VIEWS

Chemistry in London

THE Chemical Society, the centenary of which fell in 1941, is celebrating the occasion during July 15-17 (see p. 6 of this issue) by a series of meetings in London. Whereas only two overseas countries, France and Germany, sent representatives to the jubilee meetings, some twenty different countries will be represented. Among the bodies represented will be the Australian Chemical Institute, the Chemical Institute of Canada, the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry and the South African Chemical Institute. The Irish Chemical Association is sending its president, Dr. Vincent Barry. India will be represented by a distinguished delegation including Sir Shanti Bhatnagar, Sir J. C. Ghosh and Dr. Venkataraman. Other Commonwealth local representatives who will be present are Dr. T. Iredale (Australia), Prof. W. D. McFarlane (Canada), Prof. W. Pugh (South Africa) and Prof. T. S. Wheeler (Eire).

France will be represented by Prof. R. Delaby, president, and Dr. G. Champetier, secretary, of the Société Chimique de France, and by a representative of the Société de Chimie Industrielle. The Société Chimique de Belgique will send Prof. J. Timmermans. Dr. H. Jørgensen will be the official representative of the Kemisk Forening, Copenhagen, and will be accompanied by Profs. Niels Bohr, N. Bjerrum and N. J. Brønsted. Profs. G. de Hevesy and H. Erdtman will represent the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Swedish Chemical Society. Prof. E. Berner, president of the Norwegian Chemical Society, will represent Norway. Prof. D. Marotta will represent the Società Chimica Italiana. Prof. Paul Karrer will be the official representative of the Swiss Chemical Society, and he will be accompanied by Prof. L. Ruzicka. A very strong delegation will come from the great sister organisation, the largest chemical society in the world, namely, the American Chemical Society, the official delegates of which will be the president, Dr. W. A. Noyes, jun., president-elect, Dr. C. A. Thomas, and secretary, Mr. A. H. Emery. Other Americans present will be Colonel Marston T. Bogert and Prof. Linus Pauling. China will be represented by Prof. Edith Chu.

Following on the Chemical Society celebrations, there will be the eleventh International Congress of Pure and Applied Chemistry, which is being held chiefly at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, South Kensington, during July 17-24, and concurrently, meetings of the International Union of Chemistry in the apartments of the Royal Society. Lord Leverhulme is president of the Congress, which is meeting in fourteen sections, one of them being a new one formed at the request of France to discuss chemistry in relation to essential oils, flavouring materials and cosmetics. It is expected that some two thousand chemists from at least twenty-four different countries will attend. The opening ceremony by the president of the Congress and the closing session, consisting of a lecture by Sir Robert Robinson, president of the Royal Society, will be at the Central Hall, Westminster, and all other sessions at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, South Kensington. The last International Congress of Pure and Applied Chemistry, which normally is held every four years, was in Rome in 1938; the only previous one to be held in London was in 1909. The first was in Brussels in 1894.

Chemistry in Glasgow : Opening of the Henderson Laboratory

At a short ceremony held in the Chemistry Department of the University of Glasgow on the afternoon of June 25, Sir Robert Robinson named the new Henderson Laboratory. This Laboratory had been occupied by the Admiralty during the War; and the University's share in the cost of its re-equipment to provide up-to-date accommodation for sixteen graduate research workers in organic chemistry has been partly met from a fund raised in memory of Henderson's work both at the Royal Technical College (1892-1919) and at the University (1919-37). Prof. J. W. Cook paid tribute to Henderson on behalf of the University and Prof. W. M. Cumming on behalf of the Royal Technical College. Dr. J. W. McDavid (chairman of the Explosives Division of Imperial Chemical Industries) moved a vote of thanks to Sir Robert Robinson. Sir John Boyd Orr, the newly installed chancellor of the University, was present, as was also the principal, Sir Hector Hetherington. Earlier in the day the University had conferred upon Sir Robert Robinson the honorary degree of LL.D.

Zoology at Birmingham : Prof. P. B. Medawar

MR. P. B. MEDAWAR, fellow of Magdalen College, University demonstrator and lecturer in the Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy, Oxford, has been elected to the chair of zoology in the University of Birmingham. Not yet thirty-three, he has had a brilliant career at Oxford, winning a Christopher Welch Research Scholarship in 1935, the Edward Chapman Research Prize in 1938, and the Rolleston Memorial Prize in 1942. While his outlook is physiological and experimental, he has a true regard for the discipline of comparative anatomy which will ensure that his school will be well balanced and built upon a sound foundation. It is relevant to recall what he wrote in an article on zoology at Oxford in *Biology* in 1944: "It is indeed not comparative anatomy, but the *method* of comparative anatomy, that makes the substance of Oxford's tradition of zoology. Comparative anatomy is only part of zoology, but the method devised for its analysis is the method of all creative science in its most difficult, fallible, and in a sense most sophisticated form. In comparative anatomy, the object is not to examine diverse animal forms, which is easy, but to appraise the significance of their diversity. . . . If it has ever been said that a man trained in the methods of comparative anatomy should be able to turn his hand to most things, the variety of Oxford's useful researches in zoology does nothing to belie the judgment."

Prof. Medawar himself has a great variety of zoological interests, and his research lies along two very different lines. In one he is developing the mathematical treatment of animal form and the process of growth and ageing; in this he carries forward the pioneer work of Sir D'Arcy Thompson. His second main interest is a study of the differences between individuals. Here come his valuable researches on mammalian skin grafting, so important in their human application; his approach to the problem is both immunological and genetical. A recent development has been his discovery and investigation of the curious phenomenon of an induced spread of pigmentation when pieces of black skin are grafted into white areas of a piebald guinea-

fig. Prof. Medawar has a fertile imagination combined with an ability for putting his ideas for research into practice. We look forward with confidence to the development of his Birmingham school of zoology.

František Křižík (1847-1941)

ALTHOUGH he died in occupied Prague as recently as 1941, Křižík's centenary falls this year. Born of poor parents on July 8, 1847, he was as much a man of science as an engineer. His aim in life was neither riches nor fame, but he had a constant desire to invent, to improve and to lessen the drudgery of manual labour. Obviously he had to seek a career in electrical engineering, and as a youth he attracted attention by installing a satisfactory telegraph system on the various private Central European railways that were then being constructed. As a railway engineer Křižík had plenty of scope for his inventive talent, and in 1878 he introduced a block signal system designed to prevent accidents. In 1880 he produced an electric arc lamp that gave better and more constant illumination. In the following year, opportunity was taken to show the lamp at the Paris Exhibition, where it gained first prize. Gold medals were also awarded for it at the Munich and Vienna Exhibitions of 1883, and these lamps were soon being made in Britain and used for lighting the streets of London, Paris and elsewhere. Křižík now gave up his railway appointment at Pilsen and established an electro-technical works at Prague for making not only lamps, but also dynamos and other electrical apparatus and machines. He experimented with an electrically driven train as early as 1891, the year of the Prague Exhibition, for which he was both architect and engineer. His illuminated fountain and electric railway (the precursor of many European tramways) provoked wide comment and largely contributed to the success of the exhibition.

No less than a hundred and thirty electrical power stations were constructed by Křižík, who was all the time studying electro-technical theory and applying it to problems of transport, lighting and other needs. He was critical of academic instruction in physics; for in his student days at the Prague Technical University, the whole of electro-technics was dismissed in two lectures as part of the course in electricity. In his later years he was engrossed in the expansion of his works, but was certainly active and interested in the progress of science at the time of his ninetieth anniversary. He died in the midst of the Second World War on January 22, 1941, at a time when it was impossible to pay tribute to his achievements.

British Scientific Instrument Research Association: New Laboratories

THE formal opening of the new laboratories of the British Scientific Instrument Research Association will take place on Thursday, July 10 (not July 9 as previously announced). The Minister of Supply will be the principal guest. The address of the laboratories is "Sira", Southill, Elmstead Woods, Chislehurst, Kent (Imperial 2237). Recent issues of the monthly *Bulletin* of the Association have reported on the progress made in transferring the Association's laboratories from Russell Square, London, to "Sira". The Chemical Department occupies the first floor of the new buildings, with a large main laboratory, two research laboratories, a balance room, a preparation room and ample storage space. There is also a

furnace room, equipped with glass-making crucibles, away from the main building. The transfer of the Physics Department was begun last December, and it will occupy two large laboratories, a dark room and an office, all situated on the ground floor. One laboratory is equipped as a high-vacuum laboratory, with three different types of evaporation plants (Hickman, Edwards and Metro-Vickers). This section has been largely concerned in the past with the problems of production of aluminium, rhodium and anti-reflexion evaporated films. Efforts are now being directed to the production of three types of interference films: uncoloured reflexion films for beam-splitting, coloured reflexion and transmission films for coloured filtering, and strongly selective transmission filters for narrow-wave-band filters (see *Nature*, 158, 422; 1946). The second laboratory is being equipped as a General Physics Laboratory, where problems of instrument design and manufacture, such as the measurement and control of humidity, high-temperature thermocouple measurements, and the measurement of high resistance, are to be studied.

Benjamin Franklin House

ON June 27, Mrs. Lewis Douglas, wife of the American Ambassador in London, unveiled a commemorative tablet in Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven Street, London, W.C.2. This is the headquarters of the British Society for International Understanding, an educational organisation which was formed early in 1939 to promote among the British people a genuine understanding about other nations. It was in this house that Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders of the American Constitution, lived between 1757 and 1775 as agent for Pennsylvania, and carried out his electrical experiments, notably on the lightning conductor, and wrote much of his work. During the Second World War, the house was severely damaged by incendiary and explosive bombs. It has, however, been restored so far as possible to its original condition, with the aid of the American Philosophical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia and Miss Caroline Bache, a great-great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin.

The British Society for International Understanding, as an independent, non-party organisation, relies entirely on subscriptions, donations, the sale of literature and payment for its services, the principal of which are the publications called "British Surveys". There are two types of "British Surveys". One is the main edition, intended for adult reading, and the other the popular series which are especially written for use in schools. Each survey gives accurate, unbiased background information on a particular country or an international topic. The main edition is published fortnightly and the popular series monthly. The Society also recommends lecturers and answers inquiries about foreign affairs and the British Empire. Mrs. Douglas said at the formal opening of Benjamin Franklin House that it was appropriate that his one-time home should be dedicated as the headquarters of a Society for International Understanding, for it would be hard to point to a more international figure than Benjamin Franklin. "It is Benjamin Franklin the world citizen we salute to-day. He lived in a period of collision and war, but he always stood for union and harmony and he became one of the great representatives of international culture."