

### Dr. Thomas Stephenson

THE death of the Rev. Dr. T. Stephenson, at Hindhead on April 15, removed yet another of that band of amateur botanists (others were Mr. H. W. Pugsley, Col. M. J. Godfery and Mr. P. M. Hall) who did so much during the past thirty years to advance our knowledge of British orchids. Born at Brackley in Northamptonshire in 1865, Dr. Stephenson was a minister of the Methodist Church for many years until his retirement in 1934. The continual change of residence involved in his calling brought him into many parts of Britain and enabled him to study his favourite group of plants in a great range of conditions and habitats. He concentrated especially on the marsh and spotted orchids (*Orchis*, section *Dactylorchis*) and on the helleborines (*Epipactis*), both extremely difficult and little-understood groups. In a series of more than twenty papers published during the period 1918–42, many of which were written in collaboration with his son, Prof. T. A. Stephenson, or with Col. M. J. Godfery, he contributed materially towards the elucidation and clarification of these two genera. His outstanding contribution was the recognition and description of *Orchis purpurella*, now known to be one of the most widespread marsh orchids of Britain.

Dr. Stephenson did not restrict his work on orchids to England but, with the assistance of grants from the Royal Society, made special trips to France, Spain and Algeria, where he was enabled to study not only the British species but also their western European allies.

In his later years, when resident in Torquay, he helped to edit the first part of the "Flora of Devon", which appeared in 1939, and to which he contributed the part on Orchidaceæ. His interest was, however, not confined to these plants, and he was preparing an account of the mosses for the second part of the "Flora" just prior to his death.

V. S. SUMMERHAYES

WE regret to announce the following deaths :

Dr. A. S. Corbet, of the Department of Entomology of the British Museum (Natural History), on May 16, aged fifty-one.

Sir Daniel Richmond, C.I.E., during 1927–32 chief conservator of forests, Madras, on May 1, aged sixty-nine.

Prof. Väinö Tanner, known for his geological studies of the Fennoscandian region, on April 26, aged sixty-seven.

## NEWS and VIEWS

### "Proposed Central Publication of Scientific Papers"

PROF. J. D. BERNAL writes: "In their letter published in *Nature* of May 15, the President and Secretary of Society for Freedom in Science put forward a number of reasons for rejecting the proposals for central distribution of scientific papers as set forward in my paper for the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference. The paper referred to, however, has not been published as it was intended for discussion in the first place and it is therefore impossible for most readers to judge how far it is open to the criticisms here given to it.

"Many of these do not apply to the proposals at all; others only to an interpretation of them which was certainly not the author's. Nearly all could be met by useful though inessential modification of the scheme. Thus there has been no proposal to abolish either journals, editors, or to curtail in any way their admirable functions.

"Although it would be possible to deal with these points in detail I feel that it would be preferable to leave discussion of them until the Conference where new statistical and technical material bearing on methods of publication and distribution will be available and where scientific societies will be fully represented. The scheme in question is only one of those before the Conference and is susceptible to modification and improvement. In any case the Conference can only indicate the direction in which changes in publication might be effected. The actual changes might be effected in an orderly way preceding each step by observation through operational research and voluntary experiment in a limited field. Any alterations would have to be negotiated with Societies and there is therefore little danger that the freedom of science will be interfered with."

Copies of Prof. Bernal's memorandum have been circulated to official delegates. In his memorandum

Prof. Bernal states that: "More detailed descriptions of the steps which have led to the formulation of such a scheme are to be found in *Nature*, vol. 160, p. 649, 8 November, 1947, and the Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Conference, 1945—Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux".

### Dr. John Hutchinson, F.R.S.

THE retirement of Dr. John Hutchinson from the scientific staff of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, on May 31, after forty-four years service, will be noted with interest by botanists in many parts of the world. Hutchinson's early life was spent in handling and working with living plants in various horticultural establishments, and he started his career at Kew on the Gardens' staff in 1904. He showed such marked capacity for systematic botanical work that after less than a year he was transferred to the Herbarium. Here he was engaged in systematic and taxonomic work under Dr. Otto Stapf, with whom he worked for many years in the closest harmony. He was 'Assistant' for India for six years, and 'Assistant' for tropical Africa for a similar period. It was then that his special interest in African botany developed, and he was placed in charge of the African section of the Herbarium in 1922. He was responsible for some of the difficult groups (Euphorbiaceæ, Moraceæ, etc.) in the "Flora of Tropical Africa", and later, in collaboration with the late Dr. J. M. Dalziel, for the whole of the "Flora of West Tropical Africa". Hutchinson's knowledge of African plants was enhanced by two extensive botanical expeditions in southern Africa between 1928 and 1930, and by a visit to West Africa in 1937. On the first of these expeditions he visited the greater part of the Union, including Namaqualand, and travelled with General Smuts in the Zoutpansberg. The second expedition was made at General Smuts'

express invitation; on this occasion they explored widely through Southern and Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Tanganyika. The results of these journeys were described by Hutchinson in his attractive book, "A Botanist in Southern Africa" (Gawthorn, 1946).

In 1936 Hutchinson was appointed keeper of museums at Kew. He received the honorary degree of LL.D. from the University of St Andrews in 1934, and in 1947 was made a fellow of the Royal Society in recognition of his services to science in the field of plant classification. His "Families of Flowering Plants" (2 vols.) has become a standard work. In the horticultural field his special interest for many years was the genus *Rhododendron* and later the genus *Sorbus*. He has received various horticultural honours, including the Victoria Medal of Honour of the Royal Horticultural Society. In his retirement Dr. Hutchinson hopes to complete a revision of Bentham and Hooker's "Genera Plantarum" and also some botanical works of a more popular kind. The good wishes of all his friends go with him.

#### American Awards for Work on Penicillin

THE United States Medal for Merit, the highest award made by the President of the United States to a civilian, has been presented to Sir Alexander Fleming and also to Sir Howard Florey for their work on penicillin. The citations accompanying the awards are as follow:

Sir Alexander Fleming, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the United Nations during 1939-45. Sir Alexander has distinguished himself and benefited mankind through his fundamental researches and exceptional scientific contributions on the therapeutic use of penicillin, which were of major importance to the successful completion of the mission of the medical services in World War II. His personal and enthusiastic assistance to medical officers in the European Theatre of Operations greatly advanced the earlier application of the penicillin programme than would otherwise have been possible in that theatre, thereby contributing materially to the care of the sick and wounded soldiers and to the conservation of man-power. Penicillin was a significant factor in halving the death-rate from wounds of United States troops in World War II as compared with those of World War I. Thousands of soldiers are alive to-day, and other thousands have been spared crippling disabilities, because of Sir Alexander's monumental contributions on penicillin.

Sir Howard Florey, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the United Nations during 1939-45. Sir Howard distinguished himself during this period through important contributions and fundamental researches in the development of penicillin. His foresight in conferring with United States scientists of the National Research Council in June 1941 greatly furthered the knowledge of this antibiotic agent and its potentialities, and made possible the large-scale production of penicillin, for the incalculable benefit of the sick and wounded. His vigorous leadership in the researches and utilization of this agent stimulated medical scientists to greater effort and greatly extended the field of usefulness of penicillin. His enthusiastic personal assistance to medical officers in the European Theatre of Operations was of utmost importance in providing penicillin therapy for sick and wounded troops in that theatre at an earlier

date than would otherwise have been possible. The significant role of penicillin as a major factor in reducing deaths from wounds is apparent, for the rate was halved over the death-rate of World War I. Thousands of soldiers are now alive and other thousands have been spared crippling injuries because of Sir Howard's leadership in the development and utilization of this antibiotic agent.

#### Guthrie Lecture of the Physical Society

THE Guthrie Lecture of the Physical Society will be given this year by Sir George Thomson, his subject being "The Growth of Crystals". The Lecture will be given on June 4 at the Science Museum, London, S.W.7, at 5 p.m. During the First World War, Prof. Thomson made notable contributions to aerodynamics; later his attention was directed to the demonstration of the wave nature of the electron and the proof of de Broglie's Law. These experiments, now classical, earned him the Nobel Prize in 1937. After his appointment to the chair of physics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, the work on electron diffraction in particular was continued and led naturally to an interest in surface layers and to the general question of crystal structure. During the Second World War, Sir George Thomson held a number of important Government posts and more recently was the British delegate to the Atomic Energy Commission of the United Nations Organisation.

#### Inter-Departmental Committee on Overseas Scientific Relations

THE Lord President of the Council, on the advice of the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy, has approved the setting-up of an Inter-departmental Committee on Overseas Scientific Relations to consider and advise on questions of United Kingdom Government policy on matters of overseas scientific relations. Sir Edward Appleton is chairman, and in addition to representatives of Government departments, the membership will include the foreign secretary of the Royal Society, representatives of the British Council and of the Conference of Research Associations, and two university men of science. The secretary of the Committee is Mr. H. L. Verry, head of the Overseas Liaison Division, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, 142 Piccadilly, London, W.1.

#### Scientific and Industrial Research in Palestine

THE Government of Palestine Board for Scientific and Industrial Research, which is the successor of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Palestine War Supply Board formed in 1942, has issued a "Report of Activities, April 1945-March 1948" accompanied by summaries of research and a list of publications of the Board (Jerusalem: P.O. Box 607 and the Hebrew University. Pp. 56. 150 mils.; 3s.). A list of standing advisory committees and sub-committees and their personnel is included, as well as of the projects carried out during 1946-48 and the institutions in which the research was located. Most of the investigations are being published in scientific periodicals, but full reports of all of them are available on request at the Office of the Board. The Sub-Committee for Citrus Products has compiled a card index of scientific literature on citrus products to serve as a reference work for further research. The index covers the period 1927-46 and will be