

research on the acetone-butanol fermentation, and took a very active part on the Medical Research Council Committee for Chemical Microbiology.

Throughout her years in the Cambridge Biochemical Laboratory, Dr. Stephenson was greatly sought as friend and adviser. She was always ready to pay sympathetic attention, and her advice, usually given quickly and with decision, was based on a deeply considered philosophy of life. One of her great characteristics was her intense interest in people, and a favourite theme in her conversation was the influence of character upon scientific achievement or, conversely, the effect of certain types of results upon the psychology of research workers. She had many interests outside biochemistry, and this fascination by human nature was very plain in her love of the drama and the great nineteenth-century novelists; she was enthralled, too, by the history of the development of civilization and by certain aspects of the theory and history of science. She used to say that, when her laboratory life was ended, she would like to use the leisure of retirement to write biographies of a few of the men of science (Pasteur and Hopkins among them) whom she so greatly admired, and whom she felt that she in some degree understood. In one of the last conversations I had with her, the subject of present-day growing-points in science came up. It was characteristic of her to say: "Let us consider: if Hoppy had started research in Cambridge to-day instead of fifty years ago, where would he have chosen to begin?"

In her later years her interests seemed to grow wider. She had always loved gardening, and she became very keen on horticultural research. She was greatly concerned about the development of biochemical training in general in Great Britain; she was a great advocate of decentralization, and liked to see good workers from more remote places return to act as foci of progress in their own country.

One of her great qualities was her hatred of any form of cant, hypocrisy, pretention or slovenliness; she was ruthlessly outspoken in her condemnation of any such suspected defect. But this personality, so lively and so gifted with the capacity for leadership, had another characteristic: a fundamental humility, which enabled her to listen, learn, and, if need be, change her mind. She had, lastly, a great opinion of the possibilities of youth, and when the risk was debated of entrusting responsibilities to the young, her advocacy was always on their side. She would have applauded Confucius when he said: "The rising generation is to be respected. Who knows what they may accomplish?"

DOROTHY M. NEEDHAM

### Mr. T. Petch

MR. TOM PETCH, the well-known mycologist, died at North Wootton, King's Lynn, on December 24 at the age of seventy-eight, after a short illness. Born at Hornsea and brought up at Hedon, he attended the choir school of Holy Trinity, Hull. From Hull and from Yorkshire naturalists he early acquired great interest in plant and animal life, and contributed many original observations to *The Naturalist* and to the Hull Scientific and Field Naturalists' Club.

As a young man Petch taught science and mathematics at King's Lynn Grammar School, and by dint of private study graduated in both arts and sciences at the University of London. At King's Lynn he

came under the stimulating influence of the late Dr. C. B. Plowright, then in the very front rank of students of the fungi, and it was this happy contact that led Petch to devote chief attention to the study of these organisms. Later, he taught at the Leyton Technical Institute. One of his friends at this time was the late Mr. George Masee, of Kew, through whom in 1905 Petch was offered the post of Government mycologist in Ceylon at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya. He accepted enthusiastically because the post promised greater scope for his interests.

Petch's arrival in Ceylon coincided with a great extension of rubber plantations. He studied in detail the fungus diseases of the rubber tree, then beginning to cause concern, and his researches in this field were most illuminating. In 1911 he published "The Physiology and Diseases of *Hevea brasiliensis*", and in 1921 "The Diseases and Pests of the Rubber Tree", for many years the best books on the subject, acclaimed by men of science and planters alike. He also gave much attention to the diseases of other crops, notably coco-nuts and tea. His book on the "Diseases of the Tea Bush", published in 1923, is a comprehensive account of the pathology of this plant and is still the standard work.

In 1925 Petch left Government service to become the first director of the new Tea Research Institute of Ceylon, which he launched with great success. Being a man of wide vision, he realized that there were many problems in tea production besides the incidence of disease, so he gathered around him a team of experts competent to explore the whole field of inquiry. Petch had the great gift of inspiring enthusiasm and harmony among his colleagues and confidence among the planters. Both the tea and rubber plantation industries are under a deep debt of gratitude to him for most valuable services.

Petch also devoted much attention to the general study of the fungi, mycetozoa, and flowering plants of Ceylon, for he was no mean botanist as well as a brilliant mycologist. For several years he edited the *Annals of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya*, which contains numerous contributions from him, among them being "The Mycetozoa of Ceylon", "The Fungi of Certain Termite Nests", "The Phalloideae of Ceylon", "Revisions of Ceylon Fungi", "Additions to Ceylon Fungi", and "Studies in Entomogenous Fungi". He left Ceylon in 1928 with the reputation of being the world's foremost tropical mycologist.

On retirement to England, Petch devoted the remaining twenty years to the study of fungi, chiefly British groups. His only other major interest was his large garden at North Wootton, which had been designed by the late Dr. C. B. Plowright. Petch was still a most ardent collector and investigator of micro-fungi, and a constant stream of papers emanated from him, published chiefly in the *Transactions of the British Mycological Society*. Among them may be mentioned "British Hypocreales", "British Nectrioideae", "British Entomogenous Fungi", and a long series on other entomogenous fungi. One of his last efforts was to compile, with Dr. G. R. Bisby, a revised list of Ceylon fungi. Petch had numerous mycological correspondents throughout the world, whom he was always ready to help. He was a most versatile, careful and critical worker, and he corrected many errors of description and nomenclature made by others.

Unfortunately, few honours came Petch's way; but one which he much appreciated was the confer-

ment of honorary membership of the British Mycological Society, of which he had been president in 1920. He was also president of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union in 1931. Petch was a Yorkshireman of decided but completely honest views, the staunchest of friends, and a most interesting companion.

Petch married in 1908 the daughter of the late Dr. C. B. Plowright, of King's Lynn, who survives him, together with a son and a daughter. His extensive mycological collections have been bequeathed to the British Museum (Natural History).

F. T. BROOKS

### M. Georges Truffaut

By the sudden death in September last of M. Georges Truffaut, science has lost an international figure. Married to an Englishwoman, he spent much time in Britain during his younger days, and frequently visited Rothamsted, East Malling, Long Ashton and Cheshunt. From each of these he gathered much that interested him, and he created at Versailles a laboratory in which he conducted much research on partial soil disinfection, in which he was inspired by the ideas of Sir John Russell. He investigated the bacterial fixation of nitrogen under the influence of electric light, work initiated, or at least inspired, by his work at Rothamsted, and later, in his Versailles laboratory, his attention was led towards the use of colouring matters, at first in agriculture and later in horticulture.

Truffaut was early involved in the determination and use of various colouring matters as weed eradicates. In 1936 he was invited by the Royal Horticultural Society to visit London to put forward the results of his work, at a time that the utilization of 'Sinox' was still in its infancy. As things turned out, he and his laboratory were not able to carry out the extension of their programme as was done in the Anglo-Saxon countries, but they contributed to the development of the processes to the full measure of their abilities. In his last days Truffaut was occupied in working out a new formula for weed eradication which was more economic as well as more active; but his death occurred before these could be put forward. Had he lived, we should probably have heard more of him and his work in connexion with weed eradication.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Dr. Andrew Connal, O.B.E., formerly director of the Medical Research Institute, Lagos, on January 26.

The Right Hon. Lord Melchett, formerly deputy chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., on January 22, aged fifty.

Prof. John Percival, emeritus professor of agricultural botany in the University of Reading, on January 26, aged eighty-five.

## NEWS and VIEWS

### Chemistry at the Australian National University : Prof. Adrien Albert

DR. ADRIEN ALBERT has been appointed the first professor of chemistry in the John Curtin School for Medical Research, Australian National University. Arrangements have been made for the Department of Chemistry to be located temporarily in the Wellcome Research Institution, 183 Euston Road, London, N.W.1, until the necessary buildings have been erected in Canberra, when Prof. Albert will supervise their completion and equipment. Prof. Albert graduated in the University of Sydney in 1932 with honours in chemistry, and in 1937 was awarded the degree of Ph.D. of the University of London. He returned to Australia in 1938 as a research fellow in the Organic Chemistry Department of the University of Sydney, where he remained until 1947. He has recently held a research fellowship at the Wellcome Research Institution.

### Defence Services Research Facilities Committee

At the invitation of the Council of the Royal Society, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the Army Council, the Air Council and the Ministry of Supply have appointed representatives on a Defence Services Research Facilities Committee. The terms of reference of the new Committee are as follows: "To consider proposals for the use of Service facilities and personnel for assisting scientific research, and to make recommendations to the Council of the Royal Society, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the Army Council and the Air Council". The Committee has been constituted as follows: *Chairman*, Sir Geoffrey Taylor; *Royal Society*, Prof. P. M. S. Blackett, Sir Harold Spencer

Jones, Dr. A. C. Menzies, Mr. F. S. Russell; *Admiralty*, Vice-Admiral A. G. N. Wyatt (hydrographer), Mr. F. Brundrett (C.R.N.S.S.); *War Office*, Lieut.-General Sir Kenneth Crawford (D.C.I.G.S.), Dr. O. H. Wansbrough-Jones (scientific adviser to the Army Council); *Air Ministry* Air Vice-Marshal C. E. N. Guest (assistant chief of Air Staff—Operations), Mr. G. S. Whittuck (head of S.6); *Ministry of Supply*, Dr. F. J. Wilkins (principal director of scientific research—defence), Mr. H. M. Garner (principal director of scientific research—air).

The Committee proposes to conduct its business through panels of scientific men and Service representatives who are specially interested in specific projects, and at its first meeting panels were formed to cover the following subjects: (a) submarine gravity measurements, (b) surplus explosives, (c) magnetic survey, (d) aerial photography, (e) scientific expeditions. Scientific workers wishing to submit proposals for consideration by the Committee should communicate their suggestions in the first instance to the Assistant Secretary, Royal Society, Burlington House, London, W.1.

### Giant Sunspot and Geomagnetic Storm

A VERY large group of sunspots of 'bipolar' type crossed the solar disk during January 16–29. At central meridian passage on January 22·7 U.T., the middle of the group passed 28° above the centre of the disk. Two big spots were the chief components, with their centres separated 12° in longitude, or approximately 85,000 miles. The aggregate area of the spots for several days was about 2,300 millionths of the sun's hemisphere, or about 55 times the cross-section area of the earth. Greenwich data show that