

NEWS and VIEWS

Physics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology: Dr. S. Devons

DR. S. DEVONS, who has been appointed to the recently instituted University chair of physics tenable at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, graduated at Cambridge in 1935 and started research in the Cavendish Laboratory, under Lord Rutherford, on the radioactivity of radium C" and on the scattering of alpha-particles by light nuclei. In 1939 he began experiments in the Cavendish High Tension Laboratory on nuclear resonance-levels, and had already obtained a number of interesting results on the transmutation of fluorine by protons when the War broke out. In the late summer of 1939 Devons was one of a team of Cavendish physicists under Dee who were attached to the Royal Aircraft Establishment, and worked at Exeter on rocket defence problems. In 1942 he was transferred to the Telecommunications Research Establishment at Swanage and made important advances in the development of magnetrons and of very short-wave radar systems. He spent a period at the Radiation Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and later, at the end of the War, worked on atomic problems for a short while under Sir John Cockcroft in the Montreal laboratories of the Canadian National Research Council.

Returning to Cambridge at the end of 1945, Devons was appointed University demonstrator and then lecturer in physics; he was also elected to a fellowship and appointed lecturer at Trinity College. In addition to his extensive and successful programme of research in nuclear physics, including the spectacular feat of measuring a nuclear life-time of 10^{-10} sec. (see *Nature*, 164, 586; 1949), he has been engaged in high-power magnetron development for the Ministry of Supply. He also took an active part in teaching and initiated several important changes in the Tripos courses at Cambridge. The whole of his work is exemplary of a happy combination of theoretical and experimental skill; imaginative and quick-witted, he has always focused his attention on problems of real importance. His recent book, "Excited States of Atomic Nuclei", has put on record some of the service which he rendered to nuclear physics while in Cambridge; his stimulating personality will be missed at the Cavendish.

American Geographical Society of New York:

Dr. G. H. T. Kimble

DR. GEORGE H. T. KIMBLE, chairman of the Department of Geography at McGill University, Montreal, and secretary of the International Geographical Union, has been appointed director of the American Geographical Society of New York and will assume his new duties in June. He succeeds Dr. John K. Wright, who after eleven years as director has resigned his administrative tasks to return to the research staff of the Society. Dr. Kimble was born in England, attended Eastbourne Grammar School and took a degree in geography in the University of London (King's College). Thereafter, he held the post of lecturer in geography at the University College of Hull for five years and at the University of Reading for three years. In 1939 he became an officer in the British Naval Meteorological Service and during the War was engaged mainly in investigating the climatic feasibility of the various invasion projects. Early in

1945 he was released by the Admiralty to begin work at McGill, where he organised the new Department of Geography and took charge of the meteorological observatory of the University. As part of this work, he was also instrumental in establishing the McGill summer school in geography at Stanstead, Quebec, to which a number of well-known British and American geographers have contributed. Under his guidance, and with the collaboration of the Arctic Institute of North America, an Arctic research centre has been built up at McGill, and in this connexion Dr. Kimble is editing a co-operative work on the geography of the Northlands.

Terminology in Industry

AT the fifth sectional meeting of the Conference of the British Institute of Management which took place at Clonville in May 1949, the question of whether there is need for standard terminology and nomenclature in management was discussed. In the opening paper Mr. Winston Rogers, head of the Department of Management at Acton Technical College, stressed the need for terminology to be standardized as soon as possible although, at the same time, he recognized that the freezing of terminology at too early a stage in the development of scientific management would lead to difficulties. Among the people who would immediately benefit by this standardization would be authors, technical editors of publishing houses, industrial education officers and lecturers in management subjects. Once the need for standardized terminology had been admitted, it would be necessary to consider the five following points: the criteria which any term must fulfil; the nature of the contemplated standardization; the most desirable province for preliminary exploitation; the composition of the team of investigators; the authority responsible for the enforcement of the standardized terminology. Mr. Rogers examined each point in turn, and after considerable discussion it was agreed that the British Institute of Management should be asked to examine existing terms, to publish their current meanings and to encourage standard usage whenever possible. Efforts should be made to extend this work to the international field, after initial attempts in the English-speaking countries.

Co-ordination of British Geological Surveys

CORRESPONDENCE prompted by an article in the *Petroleum Times* of January 1, entitled "A Modern Geological Survey" by "A Petroleum Geologist", revealed a desire on the part of many geologists in industry and Civil servants in British and Colonial government institutions for reform of the existing survey organisation. A second article (*Petroleum Times*, April 8) by the same writer outlines a plan for co-ordination and expansion of survey facilities throughout the Empire. The suggestion is made that a permanent authoritative committee of twelve be appointed to represent geology and its related sciences. One member would be co-opted from each of the learned societies concerned: Geological Society, Institution of Mining and Metallurgy and Institute of Petroleum; three members from government institutions; three from the universities; and three from industry. A parallel organisation, the Institute of Geology, representing eleven national societies and about ten thousand professional geologists, has recently been formed in the United States; although the size of the profession in the British Empire may

not warrant the cost of an institute, it does call for a standing committee empowered to speak with authority for the profession. To implement formation of this central geological committee, it is suggested that a government departmental committee of inquiry be appointed to review and report on the present organisation of British and Colonial geology, to consider the position of existing institutions and make recommendations in relation to them. There has been a marked lag in development of British geological survey organisation during the past twenty years. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of entrants into the profession, due possibly to the break in training during the war years, but more probably to conditions of pay and service, which are not comparable with those offered by industry. The writer of the article believes that many Present difficulties might be resolved by a speedy reorganisation of institutions in the United Kingdom to meet the needs of a joint British and Colonial survey.

Education for Adjustment to Ageing

IN the British Isles the proportion of persons sixty years of age and more will be about 20 per cent in 1979 as against about 5 per cent in 1901. This ageing of the population creates serious problems for the individual and for society, particularly when considered in relation to the great reduction in manpower required to produce the goods and services needed in the country. After investigating some of these individual and social problems, a year ago the University of Michigan carried out an experimental twelve-weeks course on the adjustment to ageing; details of the course have been set out by Clark Tibbets, director of the Institute for Human Adjustment, University of Michigan, in the July issue of *Health Education* (7, No. 3; 1949). The course was based on the principles that growing old is a life-long process of development and atrophy and requires individual behaviour adjustment as each new stage is reached, and that successful living at any age requires preparation. All phases of life were covered in eight broad groups, and practical suggestions were given to aid in individual adjustment. The eight groups included biological ageing, psychological changes, maintenance of physical and mental health, living arrangements, creative activities, religion, social and economic security, and legal problems. Some interesting results were obtained on the courses. The first drew fifty people; the second had an enrolment of ninety. The students took a more objective attitude to ageing, giving more attention to their physical well-being and seeking ways to exercise their mental capacities as well as demanding opportunity for self-expression and social participation.

Outline of the History of Mathematics

A RECENT number of the *American Mathematical Monthly* (56, No. 1, Pt. 2, pp. 114; University of Buffalo, N.Y.; 1 dollar), entitled "Outline of the History of Mathematics" by R. C. Archibald, contains a very remarkable synopsis of the history of mathematics, beginning with the Babylonians and Egyptians, and proceeding to the Greeks, then to Hindu, Arabic and Persian mathematics, and thence to European mathematics to 1600 A.D. Following this are sections dealing with the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and later. The literature list and notes and the index of names at the end are most helpful to anyone consulting the book.

Nest Records of the Song-Thrush

UNDER its nest record card scheme, members of the British Trust for Ornithology are asked to complete a card for every nest of every species that they find, giving details of locality, situation, number of eggs and young and other particulars, together with the dates of recording. This method of inquiry represents a valuable advance in the technique of field ornithology, and, in a recent issue of *British Birds*, Miss E. T. Silva shows that much interesting material has been collected from 173 nest record cards for the song thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*) (42, No. 4; April 1949). The collated information shows that the usual laying period for the song-thrush in Britain is from mid-March to mid-July, when it generally lays a clutch of four or five eggs. The average clutch-size in Britain increases from early spring to a peak in May, and then decreases again. A similar seasonal variation occurs in Holland and Finland; but in the latter the peak occurs in June. The average clutch-size is larger in Holland than in Britain and larger still in Finland, at the same time of year. There is a significant variation in average brood-size in different years in Britain, and predation is the most usual cause of nesting failure. Nesting success does not vary appreciably with clutch-size or season. The song-thrush usually lays one egg each day until the clutch is complete; a few exceptions have been recorded, but more observations are needed. The average incubation period is 13.4 days and the nestling period is 13.2 days. Both periods appear to be slightly longer in the early part of the season.

National Museum of Victoria

THE annual report of the National Museum of Victoria for 1947-48 states that representations made to the Government have resulted in the acquisition of a site in the King's Domain for a new museum building. It is intended to house the natural history and ethnology in this new accommodation. The present Museum is so restricted both as regards the exhibition galleries and storage space that the prospect of a new building is especially welcome to museum staff and public alike. The director (Mr. R. T. M. Pescott) was granted seven months leave of absence to study design of museum buildings in Europe and the United States.

Quicker Forcing of Seakale

PRE-HEATING seakale crowns in water at 35° C. for three hours is shown by I. F. Storey and N. Montgomery (*J. Hort. Sci.*, 24, Nos. 3 and 4, 214; Dec. 1948) to give an increased yield of forced kale. About one-third more was obtained with ordinary commercial varieties, and larger increases with new early forcing types. Pre-heating could also be used to reduce the length of the forcing period.

Man-power Statistics of the British Civil Service

IN a written reply to a question in the House of Commons on November 29, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury stated that there were 411,762 established non-industrial Civil servants on October 1, 1949, as against 382,308 on January 1, 1949. An accompanying analysis by staff groups of the established and unestablished figures for October 1 shows that in the administrative class there were 2,689 established and 663 unestablished; 12,808 professional (scientific and technical I) established and 7,808 unestablished; 14,230 scientific and technical II established, and 21,426 unestablished; 19,566