

NEWS and VIEWS

Mathematics at Nottingham :

Prof. H. T. H. Piaggio

AFTER forty-two years of service to the University College and, afterwards, the University of Nottingham, Prof. H. T. H. Piaggio is about to relinquish the chair of mathematics which he has held with such great distinction. Born in June 1884, he was educated at Lylph Stanley School and the City of London School, and received his main mathematical training at St. John's College, Cambridge, during 1903-08. He was a Wrangler in 1906, and gained an honourable mention for the Smith's Prize in 1908. He took the London (external) B.Sc. degree with first-class honours in 1905, and this paved the way for the award of the London D.Sc. in 1914. After short periods of service at Battersea Polytechnic and with the Secondary School of Woolwich Polytechnic, he went to Nottingham as a junior lecturer and was eventually promoted professor in 1919.

In Nottingham Prof. Piaggio has built up a great reputation as a first-rate teacher of mathematics; he has probably had a smaller percentage of unsuccessful degree candidates than any other university teacher of mathematics. His book on differential equations is a model of its kind, which has run into twenty editions and has been translated into several languages. He is well known for his researches on the algebra of invariants and, of course, on differential equations, and many readers of *Nature* must have enjoyed his clear expositions of relativity matters and his pithy reviews of mathematical works. Prof. Piaggio will be much missed by his colleagues, who have found in him a wise counsellor, and a loyal and cheerful colleague who has been known to do many a kind act by stealth. He will take with him whole-hearted good wishes for a happy and active retirement in which he may still enjoy many a good game of chess.

Prof. H. R. Pitt

PROF. H. R. PITT, who will succeed Prof. Piaggio in January 1951, went to Cambridge, where he took his B.A. degree with distinction in 1935. He then began research under the late Prof. G. H. Hardy, and in 1936 was elected a bye-fellow at Peterhouse. In 1937 he gained a Smith's Prize and then spent a year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology under Prof. Norbert Wiener. After taking a Ph.D. at Cambridge, Prof. Pitt spent two years as assistant lecturer at Aberdeen, and then three years in operational research at the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Air Ministry; he reached the grade of senior scientific officer before his retirement in 1945. Since then he has been professor of mathematics in Queen's University, Belfast, where he has earned a high reputation both for teaching and the direction of research. Prof. Pitt has published a large number of papers on mathematical analysis, which have appeared in the *Journal for Mathematics and Physics*, *American Journal of Mathematics*, *Duke Journal*, *Journal and Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society* and the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*. These deal with Fourier series, Tauberian theorems, Mercerian theorems, integro-differential equations, and similar topics. Although Prof. Pitt's chair is that of pure mathematics, and his published work is primarily in that field, much of it has applications to physics and statistics, of which he has a keen appreciation,

believing that pure and applied mathematics are best treated in a unified way as two aspects of the same discipline.

Chemistry at the University College of North Staffordshire :

Prof. H. D. Springall

DR. H. D. SPRINGALL, who has been appointed to the chair of chemistry in the University College of North Staffordshire, has a wide chemical interest and experience, and possesses the rare distinction of an equal facility in both the organic and physical aspects of chemistry. He gained an open scholarship at Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1930, and graduated with first-class honours in 1934. Appointed to a senior demyship at Magdalen College at this time, he carried out researches on the molecular structures of organic compounds under Prof. N. V. Sidgwick, and on the steroid hormones under Sir Robert Robinson, and was awarded the D.Phil. degree in 1936. His early interest in structural chemistry was rewarded by his appointment to a Commonwealth Fund fellowship, during the tenure of which he worked with Prof. Linus Pauling at Pasadena. He returned to Oxford in 1938 to continue his association with Sir Robert Robinson in studies on the chemistry of proteins. On the outbreak of the Second World War, Dr. Springall became a scientific officer to the Ministry of Supply (Armament Research Department) and moved to the University of Bristol to work under Prof. E. L. Hirst. He was appointed a senior scientific officer in 1944 and was transferred from Bristol to Manchester in 1945.

After the War, Dr. Springall returned to academic work as lecturer in chemistry at the University of Manchester, where later (1948) he was appointed senior lecturer. His researches in recent years have been concerned mainly with the physical aspects (dipole moments, molecular structure and heats of combustion) of organic molecules; but his interest in the chemistry of proteins has remained, and his book on this subject is in course of publication. Dr. Springall's abilities as a lecturer, both to students and in his extra-mural courses, and his work as tutor at Dalton Hall have been widely appreciated at Manchester. A man of wide cultural background (who includes mountaineering among his various hobbies), he combines a varied experience with a great personal charm that has gained him many friends, and which should guarantee the successful growth of a new school of chemistry at the new University College.

The Premio Europeo Cortina Prize : Prof. John Read, F.R.S.

PROF. JOHN READ, in acknowledgment of the award to him of the Premio Europeo Cortina Prize, visited Italy in May, under the auspices of the British Council, and delivered lectures in Turin, Milan, Pavia, Padua, Verona, Trento, Parma, Ferrara, Bologna, Florence, Rome and Naples. The lecture most in demand dealt with "La Storia della Scienza come Strumento di Cultura" (Historical Science as an Instrument of Culture), and he spoke also on some modern researches in terpene chemistry and stereochemistry. Italian men of science, both academic and industrial, expressed great appreciation of the visit, and showed a common eagerness for a closer cultural association between Italy and Great Britain. In Rome, Prof. Read was invited to lecture not only in the University but also in the celebrated Palazzo Venezia. In several centres he established cordial contact with the Italian Chemical Society, which sponsored some of the meetings.