

NEWS and VIEWS

Directorship of Colonial Products Research :

Sir John Simonsen, F.R.S.

SIR JOHN SIMONSEN is to retire at the end of this year from the post of director of Colonial Products Research, which he has held since the setting up of the Colonial Products Research Council in 1943. He took to the new office a wide experience derived from his previous distinguished service in India and as professor of chemistry at Bangor; and has organized a system in which fundamental and applied studies on the properties of Colonial raw materials are now engaging the attention of an array of outstanding specialists in university laboratories and elsewhere. Research encouraged and supported by the Council includes such diverse subjects as attempts to find new uses for clove oil, fundamental studies of carbohydrates, the utilization of timbers, properties of vegetable oils and investigation of plants of possible medicinal or insecticidal value. With intimate knowledge of the chemical problems involved and of the workers best qualified to solve them, Sir John has found a good home for each of these and many other projects. Much of the work initiated is of necessity of a long-term nature, but some has already proved of practical value; and at that stage his close contacts with industry have ensured utilization of the results. One of his keenest interests has been in the inception and progress of the Colonial Microbiological Research Institute in Trinidad, which was opened in 1948. He has also been closely concerned with the development of sugar technology research at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, and has paid several visits to the West Indies in connexion with the work of both institutions. Besides serving on many bodies concerned with Colonial research, Sir John Simonsen was secretary of the Chemical Society during 1945-49. He has been a member of the Agricultural Research Council (1944-49) and continues to serve on several of its committees.

Dr. R. A. E. Galley

DR. R. A. E. GALLEY, who has been appointed to succeed Sir John Simonsen, graduated at the Imperial College of Science and Technology in 1930 and took the Ph.D. of the University of London in 1932. He was then successively with the Wool Industries Research Association, where he discovered and developed a process for rendering wool unshrinkable, chemist in the War Department and lecturer in chemistry in the Sir John Cass College, London. During the War he was chief chemist in charge of inspection at the Ministry of Supply Chemical Defence Factories, and then for a short time head of the Research and Development Department at H.M. Norfolk Flax Establishment. In 1946 Dr. Galley was appointed secretary of the Inter-Departmental Insecticide Committees, which were attached to the Agricultural Research Council. In this post he was responsible for the co-ordination of research and development on insecticides in the United Kingdom and Colonies, and for maintenance of liaison with the Dominions and the United States in the same field, covering medical and industrial as well as agricultural aspects of the use of insecticides. He visited the United States in connexion with this work in 1948, and in the following year was a member of a technical mission to West Africa in connexion with the swollen shoot disease of cacao. Dr. Galley is a member of

the World Health Organization Expert Committee on Insecticides and acted as chairman at the second and fourth sessions. Last year he was seconded to the secretariat of the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy in the Office of the Lord President of the Council. Dr. Galley has thus had varied experience in several branches of applied chemistry and in co-ordination services.

Botany at Liverpool :

Prof. John McLean Thompson

PROF. J. McLEAN THOMPSON is retiring from the chair of botany in the University of Liverpool on September 30, and is to be succeeded by Prof. N. A. Burgess, of the University of Sydney (*Nature*, 158, 659; 1946). As a student of Bower at the University of Glasgow in the first decade of this century, Prof. J. McLean Thompson came into botany in the heyday of comparative morphology and was closely associated with some of its most able exponents. His early researches, inspired by Bower's phylogenetic studies of the ferns, were concerned with the morphology of various rare and primitive ferns, these affording a testing ground for the criteria of comparison which had been elaborated. His reconstructions of fern steles have long had their place in standard texts, while his studies of sporangial development gave an indication of the exactitude and artistry which were to be the hall-marks of all his morphological work. In due course the fern studies gave way to what was to become his life-work—the study of floral morphology in terms of development, causality and evolutionary relationships. This may best be described as a courageous one-man expedition into a vast and varied territory. His initial investigations of staminal zygomorphy in *Couroupita* and *Napoleona* were the models on which many later studies were to be based. He approached the problems of floral morphology with an open mind, with no preconceptions as to the existence of established categories of parts, but simply to ascertain how flowers develop and what kinds of interpretations and comparisons are feasible and legitimate.

On his appointment to the chair of botany in the University of Liverpool in 1921 these floral studies were pursued with vigour, the collections of many visits to tropical and subtropical regions being worked up. These studies have, on the whole, related to orders where a not inconsiderable measure of complexity is the rule; but his elucidations of even the most complex of configurations and his supremely elegant, detailed illustrations constitute a mine of information to which future botanists, interested in these problems, will often return. The data of his studies of advances in sterility and in gigantism, and supporting his theories of the leguminous strobilus and the Scitamian flower, will long stand as models of what the morphologist has been able to contribute in this field of research. In the more recent period, Prof. Thompson has been occupied with the very complex and enigmatic phenomenon of cauliflory. In these studies he has shown the extraordinary morphogenetic potentiality and diversity of the bud-forming regions of the trunks of various woody species. Again, the details of development are of a very high order of complexity; and while it cannot be said that the underlying causal factors have been ascertained, his demonstrations indicate what the problems are and where the solutions are to be sought. The hope may perhaps be expressed that in his retirement Prof. Thompson will bring together in