

NEWS and VIEWS

Mr. G. A. Stewart, M.B.E.

MR. G. A. STEWART, assistant secretary and librarian of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, is retiring from his duties there on October 12 after more than fifty years of service. This service has been continuous except during the period of the First World War, when Mr. Stewart participated as a member of the Royal Scots in the campaigns in Gallipoli, Palestine and France, and was "mentioned in dispatches". Public recognition of the value of his work to the Royal Society of Edinburgh was afforded recently by the award of the honour of M.B.E. Only the senior officers of a scientific society, however, really know what a boon it is to have constantly at hand a capable and conscientious guide for every question, major or minor, on which decision must be taken. The devotion and experience of Mr. Stewart have indeed proved of inestimable assistance to the Council of the Royal Society of Edinburgh since the time of Lord Kelvin. Best wishes will be accorded him, not only by Fellows of the Society itself, but also by many members of other bodies whom he has cheerfully aided with loans of books from the extensive library under his charge, for happy years of well-merited leisure in his retirement and of success in his favourite sport of fishing.

Virus Studies in The Queen's University, Belfast

AFTER the appointment of Dr. G. W. A. Dick to the chair of bacteriology (now called microbiology) at The Queen's University of Belfast, it was decided that virus work would be undertaken in the Department. The University undertook considerable alterations of the existing accommodation in order to provide a virus laboratory with a sterile room, hot room, etc., and also animal accommodation. In addition, a grant of £3,000 was made by the University to assist in equipping the Department for bacteriology and virus work. Since no virus work had previously been done in Northern Ireland, a considerable amount of basic equipment had to be obtained, and a grant of 21,000 dollars has been made for this purpose by the Rockefeller Foundation. This money is being used to purchase, among other things, a 'Spinco' centrifuge, an 'International' refrigerated centrifuge, a -70° C. storage box, a cage sterilizer, a water demineralizer and microscopes.

Two lines of virus research work are going to be undertaken. One of these is concerned with the problem of latent virus infections based on the mouse hepatitis model (Gledhill and Dick, *J. Path. and Bact.*, **69**, 311; 1955) and the other is on poliomyelitis. To assist with this latter study, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis has awarded a research fellowship to The Queen's University which is being filled by Dr. D. Surrey Dane, and a salary has been provided for a technical assistant, Miss M. Briggs. The poliomyelitis research has started with the co-operation of Dr. W. J. McLeod and county medical officers of health in an epidemiological study of the distribution of antibody to poliomyelitis in the north of Ireland. The latent virus studies are not yet commenced. When the above research projects are under way, it is intended that a diagnostic virus laboratory will also be established, which will assist in diagnosis and in epidemiological studies of virus diseases in the north of Ireland.

British Colonial University Institutions

In a pamphlet entitled "Foundations of Freedom: the New Universities Overseas" (British Commonwealth Affairs No. 10; pp. 19. London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1955; 1s. 6d. net), Sir James Duff makes some interesting comments on progress since the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies reported in June 1944. The pamphlet also supplements the recent review by the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas. Sir James stresses the need for a balanced system and the way in which technical colleges, under the title of colleges of art, science and technology, are being fostered to bridge, for the present, the gap that exists in the Colonies between secondary school and university. So far, the Inter-University Council has succeeded in keeping a clear dividing-line between these colleges and the university institution; and at Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, where both university and technical work have been included, there seem to have been real advantages. The difficulty in recruiting worthy staff has not materialized, largely because very hard and effective work at the Council's London office has ensured the finding of good recruits and their subsequent promotion on return to Great Britain. The number of students is growing steadily, and most British universities tend to limit their quota of Colonial students to those seeking higher degrees or studying subjects not available locally. Sir James stresses the part which the graduates of the Colonial university institutions must play in supplying the intelligent leadership which the Colonies need as they advance towards self-government and its importance if the institutions are to maintain high standards and academic autonomy. He notes, too, the financial problem set by the high cost of the colleges, capital and recurrent, and the low national income of the territories concerned, and questions the soundness of such decisions as that to build a hospital and medical school at Ibadan to satisfy the training requirements of the University of London. Sir James believes that the suggestion he advanced as a member of the Asquith Commission, that each Colonial university college should establish a relation with a specific university in Great Britain and work for the degrees of that university until it reaches university status and grants its own degrees, would have facilitated the maintenance of high standards and greater flexibility in the arrangements needed in these early years; in particular, two-way traffic and a wider distribution of Colonial students in British universities would have been possible.

Tree Root Development on Upland Heaths

THE planting of heathlands with trees has always proved a tempting subject to the forester on the Continent of Europe as well as in Great Britain. Some research work at the instance of the Forestry Commission, especially in connexion with the rooting of coniferous trees on upland heaths, was carried out between November 1951 and April 1953, at selected forest areas in north-eastern England and Scotland, and has now been described by C. W. Yeatman in Forestry Commission Bulletin No. 21, "Tree Root Development on Upland Heaths" (pp. 72+24 plates and diagrams. London: H.M.S.O., 1955; 1s. 6d. net). There are considerable areas of this type of land available in Britain. The object of the investigation was to determine: the relationships existing between the development of the root systems, the soils, and the types and intensities of cultivation prior