

Salamis, and not as the conqueror of the Persian king, Fritz Haber has become immortal by his scientific work".

During the War, v. Laue became somewhat of a recluse. His only son was safe in the United States studying history. His house, where he lived with his wife and daughter, was visited by a handful of friends who thought as he did, by the sons and friends of Dutch and Norwegian scientists sent as slave workers to Germany, by French prisoners of war and many more who needed his help or advice. In 1941 he went with half a dozen friends to the derelict Jewish cemetery to pay his last respects to his old friend, Dr. Arnold Berliner, founder and, for twenty-five years, editor of *Die Naturwissenschaften*. Berliner had been forced to resign by the Nazis, and had committed suicide rather than be expelled from his home and sent to a concentration camp. Carbon copies of the obituary Laue wrote were sent to several of his friends for safe keeping, and published after the War. v. Laue never had the slightest doubt that Germany would lose the War. In 1943 he was seriously rebuked by the Nazi Minister of Education for mentioning Einstein's name in a lecture. In reply

to this, he published shortly afterwards a paper, "Ein relativistischer Beweis für das Wien'sche Verschiebungsgesetz".

When the end of the War came, v. Laue was in Hechingen, where the Institute had been evacuated. With a team of German atomic scientists, known as the 'Uran-Verein', v. Laue was sent as a 'prisoner' to England. Naturally, v. Laue was not 'trustworthy' enough to have become a member of this team, and in any event he would have refused his co-operation. Some of the letters he wrote to friends at this time about the reaction of his colleagues to Hiroshima, and their subsequent discussions on the atom bomb, are carefully preserved documents of great historical interest.

Returning to Germany, he put all his efforts into rebuilding science. In 1946 he was, with Max Planck, the first German to be invited to England. He received many honours and was elected a foreign member of the Royal Society in 1949. His ashes are buried at Göttingen cemetery beside the graves of Walther Nernst, Adolf Windaus and Max Planck—four members of a great period of science in Germany.

P. ROSBAUD

## NEWS and VIEWS

### Botany at Adelaide : Prof. R. N. Robertson

PROF. R. N. ROBERTSON, who is to succeed the late Prof. J. G. Wood as professor of botany in the University of Adelaide, graduated from the University of Sydney in 1934. In 1936, he went to St. John's College, Cambridge, as a Scholar of the Royal Commission for the 1851 Exhibition. After graduating with a Ph.D. degree in plant physiology, he joined the lecturing staff of the University of Sydney in 1939. In 1946 he joined the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, in which he afterwards became a chief research officer and is now a member of the executive. With Prof. F. V. Mercer, he founded the Plant Physiology Unit, which is run jointly by the Department of Botany, University of Sydney, and the Organization's Division of Food Preservation and Transport. During 1958-59 Prof. Robertson was a visiting professor in the Department of Horticultural Science of the University of California at Los Angeles. His research has been concerned with problems of salt accumulation and respiration in plant cells and in plant mitochondria. In addition, he has carried out work on the developmental physiology of fruits with special reference to respiration. Because of his commitments to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization's Executive, Prof. Robertson will not take up his duties in Adelaide until the beginning of 1962, and in the meantime Dr. H. B. S. Womersley has been appointed as acting-head of the Department.

### International Meteorological Organization Prize :

Prof. J. van Mieghem

THE Executive Committee of the World Meteorological Organization has this year awarded the annual prize paid for from the funds left to it by the International Meteorological Organization to the eminent Belgian meteorologist, Prof. J. van Mieghem. The prize consists of a gold medal, 1,200 U.S. dollars and a diploma. Prof. van Mieghem is chief of the service for theoretical and experimental aerology of

the Royal Meteorological Institute of Belgium. He is also professor of meteorology in the Free University of Brussels and chairman of the Belgian National Centre for Polar Research. In its selection, the Committee takes into account both scientific eminence and the record of work done in the field of international meteorological organization. Under the first heading, Prof. van Mieghem is a mathematician of the first order, who has published about a hundred papers on the dynamics and thermodynamics of the atmosphere, with the subject of energy transformations as his major field of research. His contributions to the international organization of meteorology are also very large. He was president of the Technical Commission for Aerology of the World Meteorological Organization during 1951-57, and in the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics he has been secretary (1948-54), vice-president (1954-57) and president (from 1957) of the International Association of Meteorology and Atmospheric Physics. Probably his major work in this sphere, however, was as chairman of the World Meteorological Organization Working Group for the International Geophysical Year and representative of the Organization on the Special Committee for the International Geophysical Year.

### The Swinburne Medal of the Plastics Institute

THE first award of the Swinburne Medal of the Plastics Institute has been made to Prof. G. Gee, professor of chemistry in the University of Manchester, for his outstanding contributions to the advancement of polymer chemistry. Prof. Gee will deliver his Swinburne Address at the Royal Institution on Thursday, February 16, 1961, when he will be presented with the Gold Medal and the sum of money which accompanies the award. The award was instituted in 1959 to commemorate Sir James Swinburne, who died at the age of a hundred in the previous year; it has been generously endowed by Bakelite, Ltd.