

and retiring, but when he thought it necessary he could be forthright in expressing his views in public and he could fight hard for what he felt to be right. Both his personal and intellectual qualities gained him an international reputation.

R. T. GRANT

Prof. D. E. White

PROF. D. E. WHITE, who held the chair of organic chemistry in the University of Western Australia, died following a car accident on April 4 at the age of fifty-three.

White was born in New South Wales in 1910 and was educated at Parramatta High School. He attended the University of Sydney from 1927 until 1934, and after graduating with first-class honours he worked with Prof. V. M. Trikojus on essential oils to obtain his M.Sc. He was awarded a D.Phil. at Oxford in 1934 for his research with Sir Robert Robinson on the mould metabolite pigment ravanelin. After two years with Imperial Chemical Industries he returned to the University of Sydney as tutor in chemistry at St. Andrews College. In 1940 he transferred to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine as a biochemist, moving in the following year to a position of lecturer in organic chemistry at the University of Melbourne. In 1943 he began a long association with the University of Western Australia as lecturer in charge of organic chemistry. He was soon promoted to senior lecturer and then to reader and head of the department of organic chemistry. In 1958, White became the University's first professor of organic chemistry. During 1962-63, he held the South-east Asia Treaty Organization chair of organic chemistry at the University of Medical Sciences, Bangkok.

White's research career covered most of the field of plant chemistry. Soon after he arrived at Perth he was associated with the Drug Panel of the Department of Industrial Development, seeking to obtain essential drugs from local plants. Although nothing economic came from this work, it initiated his extensive research on Western Australian plants. The many important articles which followed dealt with anthocyanins, coumarins, alkaloids, tannins, essential oils and the polyterpenes. His achievements were not always purely academic; thus in 1950 he began work on the infertility of ewes pastured on subterranean clover, leading to the isolation and identification of the oestrogenic isoflavones formononetin and genistein.

He was abroad on study leave in 1950-51 when he attended the Universities of Oxford and Stockholm and the Technical High School, Zurich. His experiences in Switzerland, working with Jeger on lanosterol, prompted him to adopt the polyterpenes as a speciality, and most of his later work was with complex terpenes, particularly those from *Pittosporum*, *Melaleuca* and *Beyeria* spp. During 1960-61 he spent a sabbatical year at the University of California, Los Angeles, and at Stanford.

While in Western Australia, Prof. White saw a great expansion of the University and it was largely due to him that the role of organic chemistry expanded in proportion. He quickly recognized advances in his science and actively sought adequate staff and equipment to exploit these advances. His quiet manner and modesty about his own achievements concealed a perceptive energetic mind which was greatly valued by his associates. His generous nature was evident in every way. Besides his research interests, he took an important part in the administration and teaching of his University, serving on many University committees and as Dean of the Faculty of Science from 1957 until 1959.

He had a deep feeling for the value of scientific societies and freely gave his time for their advancement. He had long associations with the committees of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute, the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Society of Western Australia.

White was a student of languages and a keen amateur botanist. He always collected his own plant material for research, and many overseas visitors will recall the pleasure he gained in conducting tours of the wild-flower districts.

He was devoted to his wife and two daughters, who survive him.

P. R. JEFFERIES

Prof. Victor van Straelen

THE sudden death of Prof. V. van Straelen in Brussels on February 29 is a great loss, not only to Belgium but also to all organizations concerned with the conservation of nature and the development of nature reserves and national parks. He was born at Antwerp on June 14, 1889, and his scientific work, mainly as a distinguished palaeontologist, was dealt with in *Nature* of September 3, 1955, on the occasion of his retirement in 1954 from his post as director of the Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique which he had occupied for twenty-eight years. At a ceremony of "Manifestation d'Homage" held in his honour shortly afterwards, he was presented with two *Volumes Jubilaires* containing contributions from his scientific staff.

In his later years he devoted most of his energy to Nature protection and was largely responsible for the foundation of the great national parks in the Belgian Congo. He made numerous visits to the (former) Belgian territories in Africa, often accompanied by his wife, a distinguished botanist, and was responsible for the organization of numerous exploring expeditions to those regions.

It is possible here to refer to only a few of his many activities. He founded: in 1943 the Association pour l'Etude de la Paleontologie et la Stratigraphie Houillères, which has published 36 memoirs; in 1946 l'Association pour les Etudes texturales; in 1950 le Comité pour l'Elaboration de la Carte des Sols et de la Vegetation de Belgique, resulting in the production of 150 charts covering three-quarters of the territory. He organized in 1946 the hydro-biological exploration of Lake Tanganyika, the results of which were published in four volumes. This work was extended during 1952-54 to include investigations of Lakes Kivu, Edward and Albert, and five fascicules dealing with the results have appeared. In addition, he was president, vice-president or member of council of a great variety of scientific institutions: l'Institut des Parcs Nationaux au Congo, one of his great achievements, in which he organized their systematic exploration and conservation; l'Institut maritime d'Ostende; le Comité scientifique de l'Institut de Sociologie Ernest Solvay; l'Association internationale pour la Protection de la Nature; IRSAC; IRSIA; la Comité de l'Exploration Antaretique belge de la Belgica; le Fonds national de la Recherche scientifique; le Comité national des Sciences biologiques; le Conseil géologique de Belgique; la Commission de Géologie du Ministre des Colonies; le Syndicat pour l'Etude minière et géologique de la Cuvette centrale congolaise; le Conseil de Surveillance de la Bibliotheque royale; la Commission permanente de la Chasse et de la Pêche; le Conseil supérieur des Forêts; la Commission royale des Monuments et des Sites; in addition to many national scientific societies.

He was elected a Membre correspondant of the Belgian Royal Academy in 1931 and in 1955 became Membre titulaire; he was also Membre de l'Académie royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer. He received numerous honours from other countries, including *docteur honoris causa* of the University of Caen. He was a foreign member of la Société géologique de France; l'Académie Colombienne de Ciencias Exactas Físico-Químicas y naturales a Bogota; the Koninklyk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap d'Amsterdam, the Linnean Society of London, the Zoological Society of London and the Geological Society of London.

Among more recent activities was the presidency of the Charles Darwin Foundation, created in 1959, in which he took a very great personal interest. It was typical of his untiring energy in the cause of nature conservation that only this year he should have made an arduous journey to complete arrangements with the Government of Ecuador whereby 200 hectares on the Island of Santa Cruz in the Galápagos were presented

to the Charles Darwin Foundation. The agreement was signed on February 14, 1964, and on this occasion he was awarded the high decoration of Commander Al Merito. He arrived back in Belgium two days later, and his first words on meeting his wife at the airport were, "I have succeeded". This achievement may be regarded as a climax of his career and a fitting memorial to van Straelen's work in very many fields. EDWARD HINDLE

NEWS and VIEWS

Head of the Research Department of the B.B.C. Engineering Division : Mr. W. Proctor Wilson, C.B.E.

MR. W. PROCTOR WILSON is to retire from the post of head of the Research Department of the B.B.C. Engineering Division on July 31. Mr. Proctor Wilson will have completed thirty-four years' service with the Research Department of the B.B.C., which he first joined in 1927, having previously been with the Western Electric Co. (later Standard Telephones and Cables, Ltd.). He left the B.B.C. in 1930 to join the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co. and returned in 1933 to rejoin the Research Department, where he remained until 1939. Throughout the Second World War he served in the Signals Branch of the Royal Air Force, first in 1939 as an assistant air attaché, Paris, and later from 1941 until 1945 as chief engineer of No. 60 (Signals) Group with the rank of group captain. In 1943 he was appointed C.B.E. (Military Division). Mr. Proctor Wilson retired from the Royal Air Force Reserve in 1954, retaining the rank of group captain. On his return to the B.B.C. in 1945 he was appointed assistant head of the Research Department. He became head of the Research Department in 1950.

Mr. G. G. Gouriet

MR. G. G. GOURIET, who has been appointed to succeed Mr. Proctor Wilson, returns to the B.B.C. after having held the post of technical director of Wayne Kerr Laboratories, Ltd., since 1958. He first joined the engineering staff of the B.B.C. in 1937 and was appointed to the Operations and Maintenance Department. He moved to the Research Department in 1943, and in 1946 was placed in charge of the television laboratory doing fundamental research. In 1950 he became head of Television Section of Research Department, later called the Television Group, and was principally concerned with colour television until he resigned to join Wayne Kerr. Mr. Gouriet has been responsible for a number of patented inventions in the field of electronics. He takes up his new appointment as head of the Research Department on August 1.

Plant Physiology in the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London : Prof. H. K. Porter, F.R.S.

PROF. HELEN PORTER, who has been professor of plant physiology at Imperial College since January 1959, will be retiring from the post in September of this year. She was educated at Clifton High School for Girls, Bristol, and graduated in chemistry at Bedford College, London, in 1921, later taking an M.Sc. in botany (plant physiology). In 1922 she was appointed research assistant to Prof. V. H. Blackman to work on the biochemistry of apples in cold storage. In 1931 she joined the staff of the Research Institute of Plant Physiology and began work on the carbohydrate metabolism of the barley plant. This work has been very widely developed during subsequent years to cover the enzymology and physiology of carbohydrate metabolism in a number of experimental objects. During the years 1947-55 she travelled widely in the United States and Canada lecturing, and studying enzymological techniques with Cori at St. Louis and elsewhere. When, in 1953, a laboratory was equipped at Imperial College for enzymological investigations, she

was put in charge of the research group which occupied it. In 1957 she was appointed reader in enzymology and in 1959 appointed to the chair of plant physiology at Imperial College and simultaneously as director of the Agricultural Research Unit of Plant Physiology. She was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1956 and Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry in 1964. She has served on many committees of the Royal Society including the Biological Research Committee.

Prof. C. P. Whittingham

PROF. C. P. WHITTINGHAM, at present head of the Department of Botany at Queen Mary College, University of London, will be transferring to the chair of plant physiology at Imperial College in October 1964. Prof. Whittingham was educated at Owen's School, London, and St. John's College, Cambridge, where he obtained first-class honours in the Natural Sciences Tripos (Botany) in 1943. He was Hughes prizeman in the College and Frank Smart prizeman in the University. During the Second World War he carried out research on the physiology of crop plants at Imperial College and later at the Department of Agriculture, Oxford. During 1945-50 he worked with Profs. Robert Emerson and van Niel in the United States. He returned to research on photosynthesis at the Botany School, Cambridge, and continued this while on a further visit to the United States with Prof. A. H. Brown, Minnesota. During 1952-58 he held a research appointment in the Botany School at Cambridge. Prof. Whittingham's main interest has always been centred on photosynthesis, concerning which he has many publications to his credit, and he is the author, in association with Dr. Robin Hill, of a well-known monograph, *Photosynthesis*, which was published in 1955, with later editions, including one in Spanish, in 1957.

Physical Geography in the University of Wales, Aberystwyth : Prof. C. Kidson

DR. C. KIDSON of the Nature Conservancy has been appointed to the newly created chair of physical geography in the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Dr. Kidson is a graduate of King's College, London, and a specialist in geomorphology. After serving in the North African and Italian campaigns, he joined the staff of the Department of Geography at the then University College, Exeter. While in the South-West he worked on the denudation chronology of the rivers of Devon with special reference to the River Exe. The substance of this work was accepted for a doctorate degree of the University of London and was published afterwards in the *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. In 1954 Dr. Kidson was appointed physiographer to the Nature Conservancy and head of the coastal research section. Later this section was enlarged and re-named the Physiographical Section so as to include the whole range of physiography and hydrology. Dr. Kidson remained head of the new section and has directed its work ever since. He has published several important research papers dealing with coastal geomorphology, concerned mainly with the evolution of sand dunes and sand spits and the use of radioactive methods for detecting the movement of shingle over the