

particular product such as meat, wool, milk or eggs. Furthermore, much cross-breeding has been done to meet consumer preferences and changing social patterns. It is not the purpose of this article to examine these factors in any detail but to direct attention to the fact that some breeds of our domestic animals are in danger of becoming extinct.

One of the chief aims of the Zoological Society of London is the promotion of the study of breeding of wild animals in captivity. Over the past few years the Society has been concerned about the chances of survival of several British native breeds of domesticated species, as some are represented by only a few small flocks or herds, and in the case of the Norfolk-horn sheep only one flock remains in the world. The Society has set aside an area of about 100 acres of farmland at Whipsnade Park to establish small flocks and herds which are to be bred under expert guidance. Two breeds of cattle (Longhorn and Chartley) are already being maintained and seven breeds of sheep (Cotswold, Norfolk-horn, Lincoln Longwool, Manx Laugh-tan, Woodlands Whitefaced, Soay and Portland) have been established. Two 'strains' of the Soay breed are being kept. One of these has a dark brown fleece and ewes with horns and was obtained originally from Soay sheep selected by the Duke of Bedford. The other strain, which includes individuals with a light brown fleece, and some hornless ewes, was brought back from Hirta, St. Kilda, in the summer of 1963. The latter form the nucleus of a flock that is intended to typify the Island sheep and will not be selected for any particular character. Not all these breeds of sheep are regarded as being on

the verge of extinction and adjustments will be made from time to time to those which will be kept. It is also hoped to have about 10 breeds of poultry, with an emphasis eventually on purely British breeds. At present five breeds, Silver Spangled Hamburg, Golden Campine, Lakenvelder, Sumatra Game and Auracanas (having blue-shelled eggs), are being held at Whipsnade Park.

Great efforts will be made to ensure the success of this scheme—the Gene Bank—and the Society will collaborate with other herd and flock owners in trying to keep the strains viable by the exchange of stock. The Society is anxious that the widest possible use should be made of the animals in this collection; it is not enough that they should exist merely as historic remnants. It is the earnest hope of the Society that they will be of value to scientists investigating a variety of biological subjects. These animals may be useful in the determination of the affinities of existing breeds and for the study of the wider aspects of domestication of animals. It is possible that they may display physiological attributes representing adaptations to particular environments and, perhaps, some peculiarities of metabolism, growth and structure. Certainly these need investigation. The aim of many of these investigations could be achieved by simple procedures involving observation, measurement and sampling of wool or body fluids. The Society will be pleased to put these animals at the disposal of *bona fide* scientists and will co-operate so far as their resources allow in these investigations. The greater the use to which these animals are put, the greater will be the Society's confidence in the value of this venture.

OBITUARIES

Prof. Charles Baehni

By the sudden death of Prof. Charles Baehni at Geneva on January 23, Swiss botany has sustained a grievous loss. For many years he played a leading part in the intellectual life of his native city, where he received his early education and where he was destined to occupy high office in the service of the municipality, University and State. At the University he was encouraged and supervised in his first botanical investigations by his eminent predecessor, Prof. Robert Chodat, and in 1932 he was awarded the degree of Dr. ès Sc. In the same year he was appointed as assistant at the Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques. During 1934–35 he studied in the Botanical Department of the Field Museum of Chicago, and while in the United States he made numerous trips to various parts of the country and accumulated extensive botanical collections. He was appointed conservator of the Botanic Garden at Geneva in 1941 and two years later succeeded Prof. Hochreutiner as director, a post he held until his death. Conjointly with his duties as director of the Gardens he was professor of systematic botany in the University of Geneva, and for a time in the University of Lausanne.

It fell to Baehni to complete the amalgamation of the historical collections which are the basis of some of the most fundamental works on systematic botany. The Boissier Herbarium and Library were moved from their unsuitable and cramped quarters in the University to be placed with the celebrated collections of de Candolle and Delessert in a reconstructed gallery in the Conservatoire, where the maximum use of space was ensured by an ingenious system of mobile cabinets running on rails. By combining these collections a number of rare items of botanical literature became superfluous and these were sold for a considerable sum.

Baehni was the first president of the International Association of Plant Taxonomy and took a leading part

in the foundation of this important body at the International Botanical Congress in Stockholm in 1950. He wrote more than a hundred scientific papers and his chief interest was in the Sapotaceae, although his contributions extended to a number of other families, including the Ulmaceae, Lacisternaceae and Violaceae. He was also much interested in the legalistic and often controversial intricacies of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature and he was a member of the Editorial Committee from 1950. In this capacity he was involved in the preparation of three editions of that basic work. In recognition of his services, which had won him a high international reputation, the University of Geneva recently honoured him by recognizing his professorship as *ad personam*.

At his home in Geneva and at his residence in the country, Baehni, who was an accomplished pianist, delighted to entertain his friends, and many botanists will remember the warm and genial welcome which they received from Prof. and Mrs. Baehni and their family.

GEORGE TAYLOR

Prof. M. O. P. Iyengar

PROF. M. O. PARTHASARATHY IYENGAR, emeritus professor of botany in the University of Madras, died on December 10, 1963. Five days later he would have celebrated his seventy-seventh birthday. Indian botany has thus lost one of its most eminent leaders; algology has lost an ardent devotee; his students and colleagues have lost an ideal personal teacher, an able research worker and an efficient guide.

Born in Madras on December 15, 1886, Prof. Iyengar took his Master's degree in the University of Madras in 1909. He served as curator of plants at the Madras Museum and joined the Madras Educational Service in 1911. In 1921 he was appointed professor of botany in