

News and Views

Prof. T. G. B. Osborn

THE Sherardian chair of botany in the University of Oxford has been filled by the appointment of Prof. T. G. B. Osborn, at present professor of botany in the University of Sydney. Prof. Osborn graduated in 1908 in the University of Manchester with first-class honours. His exceptional abilities were recognized by his immediate appointment to a lectureship in economic botany in Manchester which he held until 1912, when he was elected professor of botany, vegetable pathology and parasitology in the University of Adelaide. The excellence of his teaching and the energy with which he threw himself into his academic work is attested by the fact that when he left Adelaide in 1927, large and commodious laboratories had been built as well as an experimental greenhouse. While in Adelaide, Osborn acted as consulting botanist to the Government of South Australia and in furtherance of the pastoral interests of the country he established a field laboratory at Koonamore, some two hundred miles north of Adelaide, where he and his assistants could study the vegetation of an arid region and make useful suggestions to the grazing interests. Certain pastoralists interested in this ecological work which Prof. Osborn was carrying on presented an area of 1,200 acres to the University to extend these investigations.

IN 1927, Prof. Osborn was appointed to the vacant professorship in Sydney, and here, too, the number of the botanical students soon increased and necessitated laboratory and greenhouse extension. In addition to his academic work, Osborn was asked by the Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research to review the botanical work in progress in the various universities and other research institutes in Australia, and in 1927 he was appointed adviser to the Council and was offered the directorship of the Division of Plant Industry; but he preferred to continue to devote himself to teaching and research. As an investigator, Osborn, in spite of his heavy teaching and administrative work, has been continuously active. His earlier published researches dealt with mycology and morphology, but since he has been in Australia he has devoted himself largely to ecological work. Not only has he made valuable contributions to the ecology of the arid regions of South Australia, but also more recently he has devoted some attention to forest problems in New South Wales, and journeys in Australia and elsewhere have given him a wide outlook on ecological problems. Since the Biology Board at Oxford has indicated that an ecologist would be most suitable for the Sherardian chair, the selection of Prof. Osborn would seem a most suitable one.

Dr. John Louis Tiarks, F.R.S. (1789-1837)

THE report of the council of the Royal Astronomical Society read at the eighteenth annual general meeting contained an appreciation of the services rendered by Dr. John Louis Tiarks, who died on May 1, 1837, at Jever, Germany, his native town. Born in May, 1789, Tiarks had been educated at the University of Göttingen and in 1810 came to England, and was given a post in the library of Sir Joseph Banks. His knowledge of mathematics and astronomy led to his being appointed British astronomer to the commission appointed under the Treaty of Ghent of 1814 to settle the American Boundary Line, the United States at the same time appointing Ferdinand Rudolph Hassler (1770-1843) as their representative. The survey of contested points was carried out, but certain matters were referred to the King of the Netherlands for decision. His views, however, did not prove acceptable to the United States, and even in 1838 an extent of 10,000 square miles remained disputed territory. On his return to England, Tiarks was entrusted by the Admiralty with several important scientific missions. In 1822 he determined the position of Funchal by means of fifteen chronometers sent from Greenwich to Madeira. He afterwards made observations at Dover, Falmouth and Portsmouth, bringing to light errors in the trigonometrical survey. In 1825 he made other observations in the North Sea in H.M. Steam Vessel *Comet*, on which occasion Sir Humphry Davy accompanied him in order to make observations on the compass. He left Great Britain in March 1835, and in the spring of 1836 was struck down by paralysis from which he never recovered.

Regulations for German Scholars Travelling Abroad

THE following is a translation of an extract from a decree of the German Minister of Education entitled "Foreign Travel by University Teachers and Students" and dated December 24, 1936, recently received at NATURE office: "It has frequently been observed of late that Germans and especially professors and students, when travelling abroad for cultural or scientific purposes, have failed to establish contact with their local national official representatives. Such contact is specially important in countries where Jews occupy a predominant influence in cultural affairs, and where emigrants seek to press into the foreground in questions concerning German cultural life. In these countries it is particularly necessary that German national guests, local or official, shall be informed of these local relationships by the official national representatives abroad. I therefore order that all under control of my Ministry who travel abroad for study, research or lectures, or