

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

for congresses or similar purposes, shall on their arrival in a foreign country forthwith get into contact with the competent local representative of Germany, with the Foreign Organization of the Nazi Party and with the branch office of the German Academic Exchange Service, whenever possible. If this be not done, a short report of the reasons must be furnished to me. I take this opportunity to point out that previous decrees concerning foreign journeys are still not always obeyed by all concerned. For example, news of a proposed journey abroad by persons under control of my Office often reaches me first through the German Centre for Congresses. This results in delay, and the person involved not only risks refusal of the necessary foreign exchange, but is also acting in defiance of my orders. I therefore hereby order all controlled by my Office to obey in every detail the Decree on Foreign Travel, and to lay before me, through the official channels, any applications for permission to travel abroad."

German Refugees at the University of Istanbul

MANY former members of staffs of German universities and other institutes have, as is now well known, either been forced to leave or have voluntarily vacated their posts, for political, racial and other reasons. Some have obtained analogous posts in the universities of countries outside Germany, and we have recently received a list of those who are now working at the University of Istanbul. Among these are Prof. H. Winstenstein (physiology), Prof. M. Brauner (botany), Prof. M. Dember (physicist), Prof. M. von Mises (mathematics), and nearly thirty others, most of whom have been appointed to chairs in the University of Istanbul. Prof. M. Freundlich, who is at present professor of astronomy, leaves at the end of the academic year for the University of Prague, and Prof. F. Dessauer, professor of röntgenology, is going to the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

Broadcasting and the Coronation

CORONATION day, May 12, is likely to mark an interesting and notable event in the history of radio communication, for it will witness the most complicated outside broadcasts yet undertaken by the British Broadcasting Corporation. The arrangements for the sound programme were explained in the issue of the *Radio Times* of April 23, while some details of the means to be adopted for televising the Coronation procession were given in *World Radio* of the same date. On the sound side, apart from the arrangements necessary for the home and Empire programmes, the B.B.C. is providing facilities for about a dozen foreign observers to broadcast commentaries in their own languages direct to their own countries. Two separate control rooms will be established, one at Westminster Abbey for the British programmes and the other at the Middlesex Guildhall for the foreign commentaries. In addition to supplying all the B.B.C. transmitters, the 'home' programme will be distributed to loudspeakers within the Abbey and to others on some of the stands along the route followed by the procession.

By this means, a large number of the public will be enabled to follow the progress of the procession and to hear the service in the Abbey. At the foreign control room, provision is being made for ten separate commentaries in different languages to be fed by land-line to the International Trunk Exchange of the British Post Office, whence the programmes will be distributed to the countries concerned. Some 472 miles of special wiring are involved in the whole installation, which is being carried out by the General Post Office in co-operation with the B.B.C. Engineering Division. This one outside broadcast will involve the use of fifty-eight microphones, and, not least among the technical difficulties, is the necessity of rendering the installation of these as inconspicuous as possible, particularly inside the Abbey.

ON the television side, May 12 will go down in history as the first day on which the direct television of a remotely controlled outside programme has been attempted from the London ultra-short-wave station. For this purpose, the Post Office has installed a special co-axial cable, connecting the Alexandra Palace transmitter with Broadcasting House and the observation point at Hyde Park Corner. In addition, and as a stand-by service, the B.B.C. will use a van equipped with an ultra-short-wave transmitter for feeding the programme to Alexandra Palace. The observation point at Apsley Gate, Hyde Park Corner, was selected on account of its having a combination of several advantages. The afternoon sun had to be behind the 'cameras' and preferably on the objects to be televised; on account of the small receiver screen, the site must allow close-up views on a level with the windows of the royal coach; at the same time, the site must permit an extensive view of the procession as a whole; finally, and not least important, the apparatus must be remote from the huge crowd of the general public. At this site, three 'cameras' will be used for converting the visible scene into the high-frequency electrical currents to be passed along the cable: one of these 'cameras' will be near the main arch at a height of five feet above the pavement; the second will be about ten feet above ground-level and will be used for viewing the crowd and the approach of the procession to within a few yards; the third will be on the other side of the arch and used for following the procession as it disappears towards Constitution Hill. A separate circuit with microphone will be used for providing the sound commentary to this programme. Much of the apparatus to be used on this occasion will be new and untried except on an experimental basis, while very special conditions will prevail on Coronation day itself. The occasion will, however, most decidedly mark the beginning of a new era in television.

British-American Understanding

SIR FREDERICK WHYTE presided over a discussion, held on March 4 under the auspices of the English-Speaking Union, on "The Contribution of British Schools, Universities and other Educational Bodies to British-American Understanding". The discussion