

translated into several languages. When we consider the multiplicity of subjects which have engaged his attention, we realize that Molisch possessed an eager and inquiring mind constantly seeking for the solution of problems which presented themselves to him, working unremittingly and rapidly, and that he was able to present the results of his investigations with clarity and in forceful language. He remained active to the end, and so recently as 1937, when in his eightieth year, he published a striking series of experiments under the title "Der Einfluss einer Pflanze auf die andere".

By Molisch's death botany has lost a veteran who has enriched botanical science not only in the domain of plant physiology, in which he was one of the foremost workers, but also, as the record of his numerous books indicates, one who was a capable investigator in many other directions.

WE regret to announce the following deaths :

Prof. N. A. Borodin, emeritus curator of fishes in the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, on December 22, aged seventy years.

Mr. W. B. Grove, formerly honorary curator of the Fungus Herbarium in the University of Birmingham, on January 6, aged eighty-nine years.

Dr. A. B. Rendle, F.R.S., formerly keeper of the Department of Botany in the British Museum (Natural History), on January 11, aged seventy-two years.

Mr. J. L. Starkey, director of the Wellcome-Marston Expedition excavating at Tell Duweir, on January 10.

Prof. Otto H. Warburg, For.Mem.R.S., director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Zellphysiologie, on January 11, aged fifty-four years.

News and Views

Science and Social Problems

WE recorded last week (p. 69) the formation of a National Institute of Economic and Social Research, one of the functions of which will be scientific inquiry into the facts and problems of contemporary human society. The committee which has had this development under discussion since last March includes leading representatives of various aspects of economics; but we miss the names of scientific workers in the wider field of social biology, or with intimate knowledge of the forces which are chiefly responsible for the problems involved in the changed and changing social structure of all civilized peoples. Two statements on the interaction between science and society may be used to illustrate what we have in mind. One is an address given by Prof. H. Levy on December 13 at a meeting called by the Manchester Scientists Peace Association. He pointed out that men of science and their pursuits are a part of society and that the results of their work do not affect society more certainly than the nature of society itself determines the nature and extent of their own investigations. Prof. Levy's address was in the main concerned with the scientific and objective study of problems of peace, and he urged the claims of the scientific man to a greater share in administrative responsibility. His argument is, however, essentially similar to that of Prof. J. Marrack in his thought-provoking essay on the social implications of biochemistry, contributed to the volume of essays "Perspectives in Biochemistry" which was presented to Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins by past and present members of his laboratory on his seventy-fifth birthday. Prof. Marrack points out that the future trend of biochemical investigation in problems of nutrition depends largely on what form society takes. It is only as a result of the biochemical work of the last thirty years, the discovery of vitamins

and the later investigations of mineral and protein requirements that it has become possible to draw up diet standards. From this fundamental knowledge, the conclusion is reached that the health of a large proportion of the people of Great Britain would be improved by a better diet and that the adequacy of a family's diet depends on the family income.

CONTINUANCE of the present interest in the study of deficiencies may provide the level of scientific and economic development which makes the study of such problems practicable, and the impact of biochemistry on society may result in an economic diet standard based on the principle of the law of diminishing returns. Instead of social services being expanded to ensure that such a diet can be obtained by all, our present social system may equally lead to a collapse with even more examples of food deficiency, and perhaps destroy the environment necessary for their study. Prof. Marrack suggests, however, that a society which took as a major objective the use of all possible resources to increase the material welfare of the people would aim at the physiological optimum, and investigation would be transferred from the negative object of avoiding disease to the positive object of using an abundant food supply to achieve a new standard of health and vigour. To the provision of this abundance, biochemistry can make its own contribution, and Prof. Marrack refers also to the way in which the study of the hormones offers man the possibility of controlling his environment to suit his wishes. The sense of power over Nature which the growing knowledge of biochemistry supplies should gradually give all men the confidence to shed traditional beliefs and inhibitions and to shape a society in which all the possible resources of science and production are used for the common good.