

NEWS AND VIEWS

Prof. Frank Schlesinger

PROF. FRANK SCHLESINGER, who is shortly retiring from the directorship of the Yale University Observatory, is the doyen of American astronomers. His work has been concerned mainly with astrometry, and has been characterized by originality, economy of effort and high precision. As director of the Allegheny Observatory, he used the 30-inch Thaw refractor for the determination of stellar parallaxes. From a masterly discussion of the observations and of the various sources of error, he laid down the methods to be followed to ensure the greatest attainable accuracy. These methods have been adopted at other observatories and have led during the past quarter of a century to a great development in the knowledge of stellar distances. After Schlesinger's appointment as director of the Yale University Observatory, he decided to erect a 26-inch refractor in South Africa to determine the distances of southern stars. This telescope was erected in the grounds of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for this specific programme; and for economy in cost, it is mounted in a meridian building, which restricts its movement to a few degrees on either side of the meridian. Intensive observations with this telescope, in conjunction with those at the Cape Observatory, have made the knowledge of the distances of southern stars almost as complete as for northern stars.

Schlesinger has also been the pioneer in the determination of stellar positions with wide-angle lenses, covering fields up to 100 square degrees, in contrast to the 4 square degrees of the Carte-du-Ciel plates. This has enabled visual observations with meridian instruments to be restricted to the brighter stars and effects a great economy in time in photography at the telescope. Methods of measurement and reduction have been carefully planned to secure the greatest economy of effort. Photographs taken with a camera attached to the telescope at Johannesburg have been measured and reduced in New Haven and, with only a small staff, star catalogues have been produced at a surprising rate. Two compilations, the "Catalogue of Stellar Parallaxes", in which all determinations have been combined with appropriate weights and their systematic errors investigated, and the "Bright Star Catalogue", have proved invaluable for reference purposes. Prof. Schlesinger's sound judgment, sane outlook and wise counsel have given him an outstanding position not only among American men of science but also in international astronomy, and were fittingly recognized by his election as president for 1934-35 of the International Astronomical Union.

Honorary Degrees at Bristol

In his capacity of Chancellor of the University of Bristol, Mr. Winston Churchill attended a Congregation on April 12 for the conferment of the honorary

degree of Doctor of Laws on Mr. John G. Winant, the American Ambassador, Mr. Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, and (in absence) on Dr. J. B. Conant, president of Harvard University. Referring to the honorary graduates, Mr. Churchill said: "Through him [Mr. Winant] and other distinguished representatives who are with us to-day . . . we make another tie with the illustrious President of the United States, and with the representatives of that vast community at a time when great matters of consequence to all the world are being resolved. . . . In Dr. Conant we have a figure, widely and deeply respected throughout the United States, and particularly among the youth who attend Harvard University, holding up a clear beacon light for young men of honour and courage." Mr. Menzies, he said, has brought with him the strong assurance of the democracy of the Commonwealth that they with us will go through this long, fierce, dire struggle to the bitter end.

Speaking of the occasion as one of rare and exceptional character because the visitors to whom they were showing honours and courtesies are playing an important part in the universal drama which is unfolding, Mr. Churchill said, "Here we gather in academic robes and go through ceremonials and repeat formulas—here in battered Bristol, with the scars of new attacks upon it. Many of those here to-day have been all night at their posts and all have been under the fire of the enemy, under heavy and protracted bombardment. That you should gather in this way is a mark of fortitude and phlegm, of a courage and detachment from material affairs worthy of all that we have learned to believe of ancient Rome or of modern Greece."

Yugoslav Fauna and Flora

THE extension of war into Yugoslav territory takes it into an area of the south-eastern Europe fauna and flora which had only begun to be properly explored by biologists within modern times. The British Museum expedition of 1937 collected four species of *Clitellus* (susliks or gophers) in Yugoslavia (*Annals and Mag. of Nat. Hist.*, May 1940), two of which were new to science, *Clitellus c. karamani* (named in honour of Dr. Stanka Karaman, explorer of Macedonian fauna), from Karadjica Mountains, Macedonia, and *Clitellus c. laskeri* (named after Prof. V. Laskarer, of the University of Belgrade). Slovenia contains abundant chamois, red and roe deer, bear, wild boar and even lynx, while its avi-fauna includes capercaillie and stone partridge, mostly protected by the 1931 game laws. Spoonbills nest abundantly on the Obekska Bara bird reservation near Belgrade. In the Knez Mihaileva region buzzards and eagles are still well established, while magpies and jays from the Belgrade suburbs have frequently been observed passing over the city.