

started their evolutionary course as homogeneous fluid masses with temperatures of several thousand degrees. Dr. Rupert Wildt discusses this problem in an interesting paper, but, as might be expected with a subject of such complexity, there is a large amount of speculation in his theories. Dr. C. T. Elvey reports on spectrophotometric and photo-electric studies of the night sky, and discusses the permanent or 'non-polar' aurora, which is much less spectacular than the better known northern or southern lights. The spectra indicate that atoms or molecules of oxygen, sodium, nitrogen, nitric oxide, water, and sometimes ionized nitrogen are involved. Spectrophotometric studies, in which Dr. Alice Farnsworth collaborated, refer to radiations originating about 800 miles above the earth's surface. Photo-electric observations concern radiations from altitudes of about 200 miles. Infra-red observations of the intensity of the light of the night sky show that there is sometimes a steady decrease throughout the night, and also that such observations are associated with times when terrestrial magnetic activity is low. It is suggested that this regular variation may be explained on the theory that the radiation is caused by the release of energy when oxygen atoms combine to form oxygen molecules.

### Recent Earthquakes

AN earthquake with epicentre in the Songea District (Livingstone Mountains) near Lake Nyasa, Tanganyika, was reported from Dar es Salaam on November 8. It is said to have been the most serious for many years and wrecked many buildings and a Roman Catholic mission. Damage is estimated to have been near £3,000. No casualties have been reported.

Dr. Perry Byerly of the University of California reported the registration of a very large earthquake by the seismographs at Berkeley at 8.2 a.m. Eastern War Time on November 10. The epicentre was estimated to have been 9,500 miles from Berkeley.

During October 1942 only two important earthquakes have been registered by the seismographs at Kew Observatory. These were on October 20 and 26, respectively. The former began recording at 23h. 35m. 55s. U.T. and attained a ground amplitude of  $195 \mu$  at 00h. 27m. 06s. on October 21. The epicentral distance from Kew may have been 11,200 km., but the analysis is tentative since the record was interrupted by large microseisms. The latter began recording with compressional  $iP$  on all three components at 21h. 21m. 19s. U.T. and attained a maximum ground amplitude at Kew of  $89 \mu$  at 21h. 56m. 57s. U.T., the recording being complete at 23h. 55m. U.T. The epicentre may have been 8,700 km. from Kew, almost in a south-westerly direction. On October 30 an earthquake shock of considerable strength was reported from Switzerland. No further details are so far available.

### Reginald Farrer (1880-1920).

THE pre-war vogue of rock gardens owes much to the enthusiasm of Reginald Farrer (1880-1920). His home was in Ingleton, Yorkshire, where the natural scenery is itself a rock garden, and Farrer began to combine this beauty with horticultural concentration of colour at the early age of fourteen. Two short papers by E. H. M. Cox, one of Farrer's collaborators, and Humphrey Denham (*J. Roy. Hort. Soc.*, 67, Pt. 9; 1942) portray Farrer's life and his contributions to gardening. Having exhausted the possibilities of the

European Alps, he made two expeditions to China; from that country he introduced the beautiful threepenny-bit rose (*R. Farreri*), *Buddleia alternifolia*, several species of *Rhododendron*, *Aster Farreri*, *Viburnum fragrans*, and many others. Aside from his botanical contributions, Farrer's life is an outstanding study in determination; he had very poor physique and was "a Yorkshireman with an inferiority complex", yet his contributions to horticulture rank among the greatest.

### John Amos Comenius

ON October 24, 1941, the tercentary of the visit of John Amos Comenius to England was commemorated at Cambridge, and in *NATURE* of November 22 there appeared an account of Comenius, his life and work, by Dr. Gerald Druce. It was then intended that the papers read at the commemoration would be published in permanent form. This intention has been carried out by the appearance of a volume entitled "The Teacher of Nations", containing all the papers read, whether short or long (Cambridge University Press, 5s. net). The volume, which is edited by Dr. Joseph Needham, contains also a chronological table showing the events in the life of Comenius, by Dr. R. F. Young, and a select bibliography of the works of Comenius by Anne Heyberger.

### British Rheologists' Club

AT the annual general meeting of the British Rheologists' Club, held on November 6, the following officers were elected: *President*, Dr. C. F. Goodeve; *Honorary Secretary*, Dr. G. W. Scott Blair; *Honorary Treasurer*, Dr. V. G. W. Harrison. After the formal business, Prof. E. H. Rideal gave an informal address on "Solutions of Macro-molecules". Later, simple demonstrations were given by some members of the Committee to illustrate the Club's "Table of Deformations" (*NATURE*, 149, 702; June 20, 1942).

### Colonial Service Appointments

THE following appointments and promotions in the Colonial Service have recently been made: E. G. Cripps, agricultural officer, Nyasaland; G. R. Fenton, assistant conservator of forests, Sierra Leone; J. F. Hughes, assistant conservator of forests, Tanganyika Territory; C. C. B. Brown, veterinary officer, Tanganyika Territory; L. C. Stones, veterinary officer, Gold Coast; J. N. R. Brown (agricultural officer), senior agricultural officer, Tanganyika Territory.

### Work of Scientific Men of the United Nations

THE Association of Scientific Workers is holding a conference on "Scientists of the United Nations and the War Effort" at Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1, on December 5 (2.30 p.m.) and 6 (11 a.m.), under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Gregory, president of the British Association. Prominent scientific workers from more than fifteen countries will give addresses on the destruction and distortion of science in the oppressed countries and will show by contrast the contribution of scientific men of the United Nations who are in Great Britain to the war effort. Applications for invitations should be sent to the secretary, Foreign Scientists Committee, Association of Scientific Workers, Hanover House, 73 High Holborn, W.C.1.