NEWS and VIEWS

Agricultural Research Council: Secretaryship

IT is announced that Mr. J. C. F. Fryer, director of the Plant Pathological Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture at Harpenden, has been appointed to succeed the late Prof. W. W. C. Topley as secretary of the Agricultural Research Council. Mr. Fryer is well known in scientific and official circles and his appointment to this responsible position is amply justified by his special qualifications. He has held his present post for a number of years and at one time it was combined with that of entomologist to the Ministry of Agriculture. Much of the improved technique applied in recent years to pest control has been the result of work initiated or fostered by Mr. Fryer in his official capacity. Educated at Cambridge, and for some time fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Mr. Fryer became Balfour student of the University. During his tenure of this studentship he carried out important researches on the genetics of butterflies in Ceylon and also investigated the fauna and physiography of Aldabra Island in the Indian Ocean. His subsequent career began with the Board of Agriculture and coming from a family well versed in farming experience he brought to his duties practical experience backed by scientific knowledge. His long and close association with this branch of Government service has left him comparatively little opportunity for other activities. Nevertheless, his name is among those who have occupied the presidential chairs of the Royal Entomological Society and of the Association of Applied Biologists. In the appointment of Mr. J. C. F. Fryer, the Agricultural Research Council has placed its secretaryship in exceptionally capable hands.

Stereoscopic Projection

ON June 17, at the Aldis Works, Birmingham, Mr. A. C. W. Aldis gave a demonstration of the stereoscopic projection. He employed special high-intensity projectors of his own design which gave a vivid impression of stereoscopic relief when viewed through the usual coloured anaglyphs. These projectors gave a remarkable efficiency with brilliant screen illumination in spite of the loss of brightness involved by the use of anaglyphs and coloured filters for the screen projections.

Mr. Aldis's approach was through the theory of stereoscopic vision. He invited his audience by suitable screen tests to determine their own stereoscopic appreciation, and produced by means of plane geometrical patterns projected from 50 ft. or more an impression, when viewed through anaglyphs, of a suspended luminous sphere which appeared to move towards the observer, meanwhile diminishing in size. The latter part of the demonstration showed the modern method of prospecting for minerals in jungle territory by means of stereoscopic photographs of the terrain, and was followed by scenes from the actual bomb damage in Germany including the Möhne Dam before and after the attack, the Eder Dam, the Herdicke Bridge and the damage to Mainz, Rostock, Düsseldorf and the Phillips Radio Factory at Eindhoven. These photographs, when viewed by stereoscopic vision, were particularly convincing, and the wealth of detail exhibited gave adequate testimony to the value of the method of projection which Messrs. Aldis have devised.

Penicillin Treatment of War Wounds

THE Medical Research Council's War Memorandum No. 12, entitled "The Use of Penicillin in Treating War Wounds" (H.M. Stationery Office, 1944. 3*d.* net), is a valuable publication embodying the instructions issued by the Penicillin Trials Committee of the Medical Research Council. There is a prospect, says the memorandum, that large quantities of penicillin may shortly be available and in particular it may be possible to treat a considerable number of casualties in forthcoming military operations. The memorandum is intended to be a guide for the treatment of battle casualties and for the laboratory control of such treatment, and it does not pretend to be a guide to all the clinical uses of penicillin (for a note on these see NATURE, April 29, p. 521; 1944). Further, its instructions are provisional, because experience of the treatment of wounds with penicillin is still relatively small. The properties of penicillin are briefly discussed, and a list is given of the bacteria which are susceptible and resistant to it. Other sections deal with the preparation of penicillin and with its local and systemic administration, with its uses for particular types of wounds, with failures of the treatment and with the laboratory procedures which are necessary for the control of the treatment (diagnosis of the bacteria present, titration of the penicillin content of the blood and of the potency of the penicillin). The memorandum concludes with a valuable list of selected publications and memoranda on penicillin.

Polish Medical Science

THE medical issue of "Polish Science and Learning" (London: Oxford University Press, 1944. 2*s.* 6*d.*), which is one of a series of booklets edited by the Association of Polish University Professors and Lecturers in Great Britain, is, its editors state, an attempt to lay a foundation for the future in collaboration with the scientific workers of other nations. The creation of the Polish Medical School and of the Paderewski Hospital in Edinburgh is, as Prof. Jurasz says in his article about them, a symbolic act, a practical demonstration of the determination of the Polish people to continue their national life in spite of all the sufferings of their country; and it demonstrates the existence of practical collaboration between two very different nations. It is perhaps difficult for some Englishmen to realize what hope and encouragement the creation of these two medical centres has meant to the Polish people. Already fifty-three students have graduated from the Polish Medical School. Many civilian students who are unfit for the Polish armed forces have joined it after leaving their schools in Great Britain, and others have got leave from the Army to continue their studies interrupted by the War, while some have gone there from the U.S.S.R. or after their escape from German prison camps. The Paderewski Hospital is devoted entirely to Polish patients and to the training of medical students and graduates. In addition to this hospital provision, valuable work has been done by a Polish sanatorium for tuberculous cases in Great Britain. Established at the end of 1942 at Gallowhill Hall, this sanatorium has now a capacity of one hundred beds and can carry out the best treatment. The majority of Polish cases of tuberculosis are, however, still distributed throughout British hospitals and Polish military hospitals. The percentage of tuberculosis, says Dr. Spitzer, is higher now among

Poles in exile than it was in Poland before the War, so that there is urgent need of the developments which are contemplated.

Something of what is happening in Poland now may be imagined by reading between the lines of the extract from a secret report on the condition of the Polish children which this journal publishes. At all ages the theoretical rations of Polish children are half the theoretical normal calorie value, while those of Nazi children are well above this norm. In practice, the writer of this report states, the quantity and quality of the food fluctuate; sometimes it is reduced to nil. In the Rodom district, for example, the children of the landworkers do not get any ration cards at all. Almost everywhere the distribution of milk to children under three has been suspended. The writer concludes that the rations show a deficiency of 90 per cent of fats, 80 per cent of albumins and 50–60 per cent of carbohydrates. It is not surprising that infectious diseases and "a frightening mortality", with a high percentage of tuberculosis, which is increasing, and of heart weakness are evident among Polish children. These conditions are, as recent articles in the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet* and discussions in the Houses of Lords and Commons have shown, reproduced in most of the occupied countries. It is easy to exaggerate them; but we should not commit the graver error of underestimating their consequences. The agricultural basis of European rehabilitation is clearly recognized, and Polish veterinarians have for long been co-operating with British veterinarians in the reconstruction of Polish veterinary medicine. An article on this, and others on the improvement of Polish milk hygiene and on the eradication of tuberculosis from Polish cattle, 25–50 per cent of which are, Dr. Mglej tells us, tuberculous, indicate that this aspect of the future is not being neglected.

Classification in Biology

THE question is often asked by students as to which is the 'right' classification of a group of animals. Mr. K. H. Chapman, lecturer in zoology, Rhodes University College, Grahamstown, South Africa, directs attention to certain ideas that must be kept in mind when considering schemes of classification from this point of view in a communication to the Editors which is summarized below. Although such conceptions have been put forward before, there persists so much misconception about the nature and purpose of systematics in biology, not only among students but also among biologists themselves, that it is necessary to re-emphasize these points. It is probable that no classification is right or definitive because there is no real classificatory system outside ourselves that it is only necessary for us to discover. In most groups it is obvious that we can only deal with survivors; and even where fossils do exist, they are unselected members of the group from this point of view. Thus it follows that natural classification is an unfortunate term. Living animals do not fall into true and equivalent groups even though we arbitrarily place them in such, and consequently we can only regard classification as a convenient tool with which to deal with a large mass of material, and it does not have a natural existence of itself. It is only necessary to compare the species, genera and other groups of insects with the similarly named categories in other phyla to realize their non-equivalence. The species, whatever it may be, also must be regarded as a dynamic and not a static unit, and any living group may, in the course of time, become something different. The question of polyphylletic origins also arises; for example, W. A. Herdman suggested that the compound ascidians are an assemblage of groups evolved from different groups of the simple ascidians which had independently assumed the colonial habit of growth. Any classification is to be regarded as an expression of a scale of values which indicates, in the opinion of its proposer, the relative nearness or farness of two or more groups with respect to one another.

The British Bryological Society

FEW associations of naturalists have been originated by advertisement, but such was the genesis of the Moss Exchange Club. The Rev. C. H. Waddell first advertised in *Science Gossip* in December 1895 and, from the twenty-three favourable replies, founded the Club in the following year, when 2,077 specimens were distributed. It remained an association depending very largely on postal contact until 1922, when the need for closer personal association in field meetings led to the formation of the British Bryological Society. Miss Eleonora Armitage has collated the annual reports of both Club and Society into a short pamphlet (Miss Armitage, Dadnor, Ross). She was president at the Society's last meeting in 1939, and this review should serve the purpose of sustaining the collective interests of bryologists until more stable times allow a resumption of their activities. Several census lists of British bryophytes have been published, from the York Catalogue, compiled by J. A. Wheldon in 1889, to the latest taxonomic indexes for mosses, compiled by J. B. Duncan in 1926, and for hepatics, by A. Wilson in 1930. The taxonomy of mosses and liverworts is now largely established, but many bryological matters still require elucidation. Perhaps the post-war period will provide opportunities for detailed ecological studies —the relation of a moss or liverwort to its substrate, its reactions with other plants, and particularly of its unique physiology, which allows a special phenology of reproduction not possessed by any other kind of plant.

Work of the League of Nations

THE report on the work of the League of Nations during 1942–43, submitted by the Acting Secretary-General, in addition to an introductory section giving a useful survey of proposals for future world organization, contains chapters on economic, financial and transit questions, on questions of a social and humanitarian character, on questions of a legal and administrative character and on the Library of the League. The work of the League on the first group of questions is reflected chiefly in a series of reports which have already been noticed; but in regard to the second group, the report affords strong evidence that whatever views may be held as to the continuance of the League as a co-ordinating machinery in political affairs, its technical organizations should be retained as part of the functional apparatus set up in any future world organization.

The Health Section has concentrated its attention during the year on the present food scarcity, and on malnutrition and the danger of epidemic outbreaks in Europe. A comprehensive study of the trend of morbidity and mortality of European countries in relation to food shortage is shortly to