

NEWS and VIEWS

Hydrographer of the Navy :
Retirement of Vice-Admiral Sir John Edgell,
K.B.E., C.B., F.R.S.

ON April 30, Vice-Admiral Sir John Edgell retired from the post of Hydrographer of the Navy which he had held since 1932. Sir John has seen fifty-one years of service in the Navy, and had been in the Surveying Service for forty-three years. He held the post of hydrographer for longer than any other officer since Admiral Wharton (1884-1904) and had in fact done so for more than twice as long as any of his predecessors in the post save one. The work of the Surveying Service under Sir John in the major operations has been commented on again and again during the War, most notably perhaps by the late Admiral Ramsay in a report on the invaluable help given in the preparation for and the consummation of *D* day. But here it is more appropriate to refer to his interests in marine science generally. Sir John was elected F.R.S. in 1943, and was the first Hydrographer of the Navy to receive that high distinction since Sir Mostyn Field (1904-9). He has served as a member of the Port of London Authority since July 1941, and has now (it is understood) become acting conservator of the River Mersey. Shortly after he was appointed Hydrographer of the Navy, he became chairman of the Sub-Committee for Physical Oceanography of the National Committee for Geodesy and Geophysics, a position he still holds. It is well known that the "Discovery" Committee has, since its early days, had exceptionally valuable assistance from the Hydrographer of the Navy in the planning and running of its fine expeditions to high southern latitudes, and since Sir John succeeded Admiral Douglas on the Committee, his help has been very greatly valued.

Sir John Edgell also takes part in the Development Commission's work on fisheries research, and, by participation in the conferences of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, has become closely acquainted with foreign oceanographers. What has so far been said touches the past and the present, but it may easily be appreciated what great hopes British oceanographers have for the future, knowing that Sir John is applying his very best efforts to the end that Britain shall become possessed of a national institution of oceanography. He has already presided over meetings of scientific men working towards that goal, and prospects seem promising, largely thanks to his energetic interest; if Britain should once again take up a foremost position in the study of the sea, it will be greatly due to Sir John.

Rear-Admiral A. G. N. Wyatt

REAR-ADMIRAL A. G. N. WYATT, who succeeds Sir John Edgell, was born in 1893, being twelve years younger than his immediate predecessor. It is interesting to note that he is the first Hydrographer to enter the Navy after the withdrawal of H.M.S. *Britannia*, and, consequently, through the Royal Naval Colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth. He had the distinction of being selected as a chief cadet captain of his term, evidence that at an early age he displayed those qualities of leadership and character so noticeable in later life, and the award of the Royal Humane Society's medal for life-saving in a yachting disaster, when only in his early teens, was

indicative of his courage and powers of endurance. He went to sea as a midshipman in 1910. During the War of 1914-18, he served in destroyers and in the battleship *Prince of Wales* as a watch-keeper, and, during the last year of the War, in command of a destroyer. As a young lieutenant, he was an expert boat-sailer, at which he excelled, even in a profession where a high standard of proficiency in that art is anticipated. It was not until 1918 that he decided, on joining H.M.S. *Melisande* as a fourth class assistant surveyor, to devote his life to that service of which he was destined, twenty-seven years later, to become the head.

A distinctive feature in the new Hydrographer's career is his long period of service in charge of surveys at sea: he has commanded six of H.M. surveying ships, extending over a period of fifteen years; in fact, except for a spell of eighteen months as superintendent of charts at the Admiralty and, early in the present War, an appointment for a similar term as assistant hydrographer, he has been in charge afloat since 1926, when he joined his first surveying command, H.M.S. *Ormonde*. His hydrographic services have taken him to such varied parts of the world as Labrador, the Persian Gulf, Australia and New Zealand. During the greater part of this War, Admiral Wyatt was in command of H.M.S. *Challenger* in eastern waters. On relinquishing this command to take over his new duties, he received a letter of appreciation from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for his services "in the valuable work of surveys completed under your direction since your arrival in the eastern theatre of war".

Educational Plans and Purposes

IN accordance with the general view that the study of education is a branch of sociology, *Nature* has duly reported to its readers the discussions that led to the Education Act of 1944, and those that have so far resulted from that event. A new step has now been taken. The Ministry is to publish a series of pamphlets, the first of which, bearing the title "The Nation's Schools: their Plan and Purpose", has just appeared (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1945. Pp. 32. 6d. net). Here the Ministry comes to close grips with the facts, the object of the pamphlet being "to set out some reflections relating planning to purpose in terms, not of the legal 'child', but of living children". Each kind of school is tersely dealt with, beginning with nursery and infant schools. Here, by the way, a curious *lapsus calami* attributes to Margaret Macmillan the great saying, "Educate every child as if he were your own". It was Rachel's saying, reverently quoted by her sister Margaret. The section on junior schools touches a sore spot when it remarks that so far "the juniors have too often had to make do with the accommodation available after the seniors have been dealt with".

It is, however, when the pamphlet leaves the subject of primary and enters upon that of secondary education that the difficulties begin. The old identification of secondary and grammar-school education is traced to its historical causes, and blamed for its unfortunate consequences. The promising junior technical schools, now in wholly insufficient supply, are explained, their vitality and successful development being attributed in part to "their freedom from the ties of any external examination". In the section on modern schools we read again that "free from the pressures of any external examination, these schools can work out the best and liveliest forms of