

Dr. Victor Robinson

THOSE who had known Victor Robinson only through his writings were unwilling at first, when they met him face to face, to associate this modest, hypersensitive, and extremely genial little man with so dramatic, fiery and sentimental a pen. Nevertheless, as a historian he was painstakingly accurate, being most scrupulous in going to the original sources.

The son of a medical man, Robinson was born in the Ukraine on August 16, 1886, emigrating to the United States of America in infancy. One of the first to specialize in the history of medicine in that country—he used to confess that his interest in the subject gave him the same sort of satisfaction as the devotee of *hasheesh* derives from his pipe—in 1912 he published one of his best known and most popular books, "Pathfinders in Medicine", for which he was hailed as the "Poet of Science". Eight years later he founded *Medical Life*, stated to be the first monthly journal of medical history in the English language. Specializing in valuable medico-historical symposia, at one period it served as the official organ of the American Society of Medical History. Beginning with the October 1922 issue the section on clinical medicine was eliminated. Its editorial board included

such distinguished historians as Castiglioni, Comrie, de Lint, Ebstein, Neuburger, Sigerist, and Sudhoff. Robinson's last book, "Victory over Pain: a History of Anesthesia", was published in New York late last year, and it is interesting to be reminded that the author's first contribution to the literature of medical history was an article on "Simpson on Chloroform", and that his name was first listed in the "Index Medicus" under the heading of "Anesthetics".

Robinson was professor of the history of medicine at Temple University Medical School, Philadelphia, and lecturer on the history of nursing. He occupied a delightful apartment in New York's Greenwich Village. His medico-historical library was enviably complete, making him more or less independent of the City's reference libraries. Though an apparently facile writer, he was a tremendously hard worker, the German word *Sitzfleisch* being often on his lips. One of his most novel and entertaining essays appeared in the *Medical Review of Reviews* in 1929, describing his experiences with the fluid extract of *hasheesh*. In the introduction to "Pathfinders in Medicine", Victor Robinson characteristically admitted having entered the field of medical history as he had entered several others—out of curiosity. "But the fruit was tempting, and I have gathered it ever since." W. R. BETT

NEWS and VIEWS

An International Trust for Zoological Nomenclature

IN view of the rapid growth in recent years in the volume of its work, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (which is an unincorporated body of eighteen international commissioners elected by the International Zoological Congress) recently decided that an incorporated body should be formed for the purpose of managing its financial and other business affairs. For this purpose a body has now been incorporated under United Kingdom law with the title "International Trust for Zoological Nomenclature". At the same time an agreement has been made between the International Commission and the International Trust by which the Commission has transferred its assets to the Trust and the Trust has accepted responsibility for all the liabilities of the Commission. Under the new arrangements, the Commission will continue all its scientific functions, while the Trust will be responsible for publishing the Commission's "Opinions" and other publications, for meeting the administrative expenses of the Commission, and for carrying out such further developments as may be decided upon by the Commission. The full text of the instrument of incorporation will be published as soon as possible in the Commission's "Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature".

The closest liaison between the Commission and the Trust is assured by arrangements under which the members of the Commission will be members of the Trust, and the secretary to the Commission will be *ex-officio* secretary to the Trust. In addition, the Trust has taken over, as its registered office, the premises at 41 Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7, hitherto occupied by the Commission as its publications office. In order to ensure that there shall at all times be a sufficient number of members available to attend

meetings of the Trust, the Commission has arranged for the appointment as members of the Trust of certain of the honorary unpaid officials of the Commission. At the invitation of the Commission, the chairmanship of the Trust has been accepted by the Right Hon. Walter Elliot. The arrangements outlined above will provide the Commission with a strong administrative organisation and also enable it to concentrate the whole of its efforts upon furthering the orderly development of zoological nomenclature.

New University at Olomouc

THE difficulty of accommodating all students in the existing Czechoslovak universities has led to the opening of a new one at Olomouc in north Moravia. The ceremony took place on February 21 after a special train from Prague had brought President Beneš, members of the Czechoslovak cabinet, Sir Phillip Nichols (the British Ambassador) and other diplomatic personalities to Olomouc. The new university is named after Palacký, the Czechoslovak historian so long associated with both the Charles University and the National Museum of Prague; and in his speech Dr. Beneš referred to the fact that Prague's university had existed for almost six hundred years, and that the name of Palacký could appropriately be given to the new university in recognition of the historian's cultural work for the nation a hundred years ago. He said that the importance of education is fully realized in Czechoslovakia, where it is vital for a small nation to be in the forefront of progress. The immediate task is to overtake the years lost through the War and the German occupation.

The rector of the new university is Prof. J. L. Fischer, a comparatively young philosopher from