

Dr. Thomas Stephenson

THE death of the Rev. Dr. T. Stephenson, at Hindhead on April 15, removed yet another of that band of amateur botanists (others were Mr. H. W. Pugsley, Col. M. J. Godfery and Mr. P. M. Hall) who did so much during the past thirty years to advance our knowledge of British orchids. Born at Brackley in Northamptonshire in 1865, Dr. Stephenson was a minister of the Methodist Church for many years until his retirement in 1934. The continual change of residence involved in his calling brought him into many parts of Britain and enabled him to study his favourite group of plants in a great range of conditions and habitats. He concentrated especially on the marsh and spotted orchids (*Orchis*, section *Dactylorchis*) and on the helleborines (*Epipactis*), both extremely difficult and little-understood groups. In a series of more than twenty papers published during the period 1918–42, many of which were written in collaboration with his son, Prof. T. A. Stephenson, or with Col. M. J. Godfery, he contributed materially towards the elucidation and clarification of these two genera. His outstanding contribution was the recognition and description of *Orchis purpurella*, now known to be one of the most widespread marsh orchids of Britain.

Dr. Stephenson did not restrict his work on orchids to England but, with the assistance of grants from the Royal Society, made special trips to France, Spain and Algeria, where he was enabled to study not only the British species but also their western European allies.

In his later years, when resident in Torquay, he helped to edit the first part of the "Flora of Devon", which appeared in 1939, and to which he contributed the part on Orchidaceæ. His interest was, however, not confined to these plants, and he was preparing an account of the mosses for the second part of the "Flora" just prior to his death.

V. S. SUMMERHAYES

WE regret to announce the following deaths :

Dr. A. S. Corbet, of the Department of Entomology of the British Museum (Natural History), on May 16, aged fifty-one.

Sir Daniel Richmond, C.I.E., during 1927–32 chief conservator of forests, Madras, on May 1, aged sixty-nine.

Prof. Väinö Tanner, known for his geological studies of the Fennoscandian region, on April 26, aged sixty-seven.

NEWS and VIEWS

"Proposed Central Publication of Scientific Papers"

PROF. J. D. BERNAL writes: "In their letter published in *Nature* of May 15, the President and Secretary of Society for Freedom in Science put forward a number of reasons for rejecting the proposals for central distribution of scientific papers as set forward in my paper for the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference. The paper referred to, however, has not been published as it was intended for discussion in the first place and it is therefore impossible for most readers to judge how far it is open to the criticisms here given to it.

"Many of these do not apply to the proposals at all; others only to an interpretation of them which was certainly not the author's. Nearly all could be met by useful though inessential modification of the scheme. Thus there has been no proposal to abolish either journals, editors, or to curtail in any way their admirable functions.

"Although it would be possible to deal with these points in detail I feel that it would be preferable to leave discussion of them until the Conference where new statistical and technical material bearing on methods of publication and distribution will be available and where scientific societies will be fully represented. The scheme in question is only one of those before the Conference and is susceptible to modification and improvement. In any case the Conference can only indicate the direction in which changes in publication might be effected. The actual changes might be effected in an orderly way preceding each step by observation through operational research and voluntary experiment in a limited field. Any alterations would have to be negotiated with Societies and there is therefore little danger that the freedom of science will be interfered with."

Copies of Prof. Bernal's memorandum have been circulated to official delegates. In his memorandum

Prof. Bernal states that: "More detailed descriptions of the steps which have led to the formulation of such a scheme are to be found in *Nature*, vol. 160, p. 649, 8 November, 1947, and the Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Conference, 1945—Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux".

Dr. John Hutchinson, F.R.S.

THE retirement of Dr. John Hutchinson from the scientific staff of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, on May 31, after forty-four years service, will be noted with interest by botanists in many parts of the world. Hutchinson's early life was spent in handling and working with living plants in various horticultural establishments, and he started his career at Kew on the Gardens' staff in 1904. He showed such marked capacity for systematic botanical work that after less than a year he was transferred to the Herbarium. Here he was engaged in systematic and taxonomic work under Dr. Otto Stapf, with whom he worked for many years in the closest harmony. He was 'Assistant' for India for six years, and 'Assistant' for tropical Africa for a similar period. It was then that his special interest in African botany developed, and he was placed in charge of the African section of the Herbarium in 1922. He was responsible for some of the difficult groups (Euphorbiaceæ, Moraceæ, etc.) in the "Flora of Tropical Africa", and later, in collaboration with the late Dr. J. M. Dalziel, for the whole of the "Flora of West Tropical Africa". Hutchinson's knowledge of African plants was enhanced by two extensive botanical expeditions in southern Africa between 1928 and 1930, and by a visit to West Africa in 1937. On the first of these expeditions he visited the greater part of the Union, including Namaqualand, and travelled with General Smuts in the Zoutpansberg. The second expedition was made at General Smuts'