

always at home with his subject, so his discourse was quite untrammelled by nervousness or reserve, and took on an intimate quality which was very appealing. In the circle of his friends, Benham's company was prized for its whimsicality and freedom from cant and hypocrisy, while his undoubted histrionic ability made him a raconteur of the first order. A man of strong personality and unusual charm, he will be greatly missed by those who knew him.

MARION FYFE

WE regret to announce the following deaths :

Sir Frank Gill, K.C.M.G., director and vice-president of the International Standard Electric Corporation and other bodies concerned in telephonic communications, past president and honorary member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, on October 25, aged eighty-four.

Dr. G. A. Hankins, director of mechanical engineering research in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, on November 2, aged fifty-five.

## NEWS and VIEWS

### Nobel Prize for Medicine for 1950

THE Nobel Prize for Medicine for 1950 has been awarded jointly to Dr. Philip Showalter Hench, of the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, Prof. Edward Calvin Kendall, of the Mayo Foundation, Rochester, and Prof. Tadeus Reichstein, of the University of Basel. The award can be regarded as a recognition of the work which has been done leading to the dramatic opening of a new field of scientific medical research—that of rheumatoid arthritis and related diseases. Early in 1949, Hench, Kendall, Slocumb and Polley (*Proc. Staff Meet. Mayo Clinic*, 24, 181; 1949) reported on "the effects of the hormone of the adrenal cortex (17-hydroxy-11-dihydrocorticosterone: Compound *E*) and of pituitary adrenocorticotrophic hormone on rheumatoid arthritis". This was followed soon after by a report of the effects of compound *E* on rheumatic fever (Hench, Slocumb, Barnes, Smith, Polley and Kendall, *Proc. Staff Meet. Mayo Clinic*, 24, 277; 1949). Since then, investigations have begun in centres of research in all parts of the world on the physiological action and the clinical application of cortisone. This work is now developing at an increasing rate, limited only by the availability of cortisone, the supply of which on the present scale is due to outstanding team-work in the research institution of a famous pharmaceutical firm.

Dr. Hench has long been a recognized authority on rheumatic diseases. After training in America, he obtained further experience in Freiburg im Breisgau and Munich, and joined the staff of the Mayo Clinic in 1923. The genesis of the discovery of the activity of cortisone is to be found in his belief that an endocrine influence was active in cases of remission of rheumatoid arthritis, for example, in pregnancy. The approach of Prof. Kendall to this subject has been along biochemical paths. He has worked at the Mayo Foundation since 1914 and his interests have been in the field of endocrinological chemistry. He was the first to isolate and investigate thyroxine. In 1930 he was president of the Association for the Study of Internal Secretions. His work on the chemistry of the adrenal cortex is described in a series of papers beginning in 1934, and the isolation of cortisone, then termed compound *E*, was announced in 1936. Prof. Reichstein elaborated a synthesis of ascorbic acid in 1933, almost simultaneously with the work of the late Sir Norman Haworth. His work on the isolation, determination of constitution and partial synthesis of constituents of the adrenal cortex began in 1935, when he was at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zurich. The work continued uninterruptedly after transference to the Pharmaceutical Institute at the University of Basel in 1939 and was extended to other groups of steroid compounds, androstane and

pregnane derivatives, and, by way of investigation of pharmacologically active plant constituents, to the cardiac glycosides; concurrently, investigations in carbohydrate chemistry were carried out. The scientific papers coming from Prof. Reichstein's laboratory during the past two decades form a remarkable record of technical and theoretical achievement in a field of complex chemistry.

### Philosophy at Birmingham: Prof. L. J. Russell

PROF. L. J. RUSSELL, who recently retired from the chair of philosophy in the University of Birmingham (see *Nature*, August 16, p. 296), had a varied and influential career as a university teacher. He read both science and philosophy at Glasgow (which recently acknowledged his mature distinction by the award of an LL.D.) and he has never lost his interest in mathematical physics—an interest which determined the direction of much of his work, for example, both his historical investigations, which at one stage focused on Leibniz, and his numerous contributions to the discussion of scientific method. In the first flush of the triumph of the new symbolic logic he was able to mediate usefully between the old and the new, and did much to ensure that the new logical notations would be clear and distinct. More recently, his theory that some statements usually regarded as propositions are, in fact, 'proposals' has aroused international interest among logicians. Such more abstract discussions did not prevent him from taking a keen interest in the problems of contemporary society. He campaigned unwearyingly for a more concrete approach to ethics: philosophers, he contended, should not shirk the discussion of questions like birth-control, euthanasia, or pacifism. Here as elsewhere he had little patience with the 'standard works', and his quest for concreteness led him to make a wide study of social institutions and social anthropology. At Birmingham, one of his most successful innovations was a lively course on the logic of the social sciences. He never regarded himself as a mere 'Arts' man and his services were often sought in other faculties. A selection of his articles is to be published, the publication being sponsored by the University of Birmingham.

Perhaps the most many-sided of the professional philosophers of his generation, Russell was always informal and stimulating in his methods. His influence extended far beyond the limits of the schools of philosophy which were his immediate concern, and it always promoted freer thinking and wider horizons. Fortunately his retirement is due to no incapacity but solely to the passage of the years, and all who know him will expect his coming years to be marked by undiminished activity both in writing and in new fields of practical education.