

there must be few indeed who would claim this distinction to-day); but for the workers in other fields such as evolution, phytogeography, etc., who are dependent on easily accessible taxonomic data the position is almost intolerable. Only the large national herbaria can afford to stock the necessary literature, and the number of taxonomists with adequate training and experience of European taxonomy as a whole is, rightly or wrongly, so small as to constitute a distinct problem.

Although some works have a wider scope—for example, Hegi's monumental "Illustrierte Flora von Mittel-Europa" and more recently Hylander's "Nordisk Kärnväxtflora", covering Fennoscandia, Iceland and the Faeroes—there is still no overall treatment of Europe.

In an attempt to alleviate this situation, a committee has been formed of British and Irish botanists to consider the possibilities of writing a Flora of Europe, condensing in three or four volumes the essence of the scattered published information about European plant taxonomy. Much progress has been made, and it now seems likely that the proposed Flora has every chance of success. A number of distinguished European colleagues have declared their support and interest in the project and some of them have consented to act as advisory editors. The Linnean Society of London has promised its patronage and the Director of the Royal Botanic

Gardens, Kew, and the Keeper of Botany at the British Museum (Natural History) have agreed to assist in an advisory capacity.

The Flora will cover Europe in the normally accepted sense of the word and will connect up with the area covered by Komarov's "Flora of the URSS". The intention is to key and describe briefly all the major taxa of Angiosperms and Gymnosperms that grow spontaneously in Europe. Subspecies will be included, but not as a rule varieties unless they are well marked or have some claim to consideration at a higher taxonomic level. Those taxa which are currently given a binomial in widely used Floras but which clearly do not deserve full specific rank will not be reduced in status in the Flora unless there is strong evidence for such action; normal procedure will be to include them in their original binomial form after the species to which they appear to be most closely related.

The Editorial Committee is: Prof. T. G. Tutin (University of Leicester, *chairman*), Dr. V. H. Heywood (University of Liverpool, *secretary*), Prof. N. A. Burges (University of Liverpool), Prof. D. H. Valentine (University of Durham), Dr. S. M. Walters (University of Cambridge) and Prof. D. A. Webb (University of Dublin, Trinity College).

Further information about the progress of the Flora will be published from time to time in the journal *Taxon*.

OBITUARY

Sir John Simonsen, F.R.S.

WITH the sudden death on February 20 of Sir John Lionel Simonsen passed one of the last of the chemists trained in the Edwardian experimental tradition. He was born in 1884, his father being a naturalized Danish merchant and his mother also originally Danish; John Lionel remained in intimate contact with his Danish relations all his life. He was educated at Manchester Grammar School and then obtained first-class honours under W. H. Perkin, jun., at the Victoria University, Manchester, his contemporaries there including Sir Robert Robinson, Sir Norman Haworth and C. S. Gibson.

His career included both academic and public service, and fell into four main chapters. First, six years research at Manchester, as research fellow and later assistant lecturer. Secondly, seventeen years in India—1910–19, professor of chemistry, Presidency College, Madras; 1919–25, Forest Research Institute and College, Dehra Dun; 1925–27, professor of organic chemistry, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. Then, from 1930 until 1942, he was professor of chemistry at the University College of North Wales, Bangor; and finally, until the end of 1952, director of Colonial Products Research, South Kensington, London.

In the laboratory Simonsen's sure technique was a joy to watch; typically his bench carried a few covered conical flasks or beakers, a few stoppered test-tubes, all labelled, and perhaps a distillation in progress; the rest would be an empty expanse of gleaming teak. His 176 published experimental papers—a large output since so many antedated micro-analysis—cover the whole period 1910–42, and much

was done with his own rapid, skilful hands. Nearly all this work was on terpene chemistry, that on barbaloin being a notable exception; it included a long series on Indian trees and grasses, and later many papers on Australian oils supplied by A. R. Penfold (these papers always carried also Penfold's name). He was soon an acknowledged authority in the field, and his book "The Terpenes", published in two volumes in 1930–32, became at once the standard work. This edition stopped at the bicyclic series, but the second edition, which covers also the higher terpenes, runs to five volumes and has been written in collaboration with L. N. Owen, D. H. R. Barton and C. W. J. Ross; he lived to pass the proofs of the last volume, and to the end collected references from the Chemical Society library for a third edition.

Simonsen's public services rank alongside his scientific work. It was he and Dr. MacMahon who, by personal letters, started the Indian Science Congress in 1914, with two hundred members; he was its honorary secretary from that beginning until 1926, and its president in 1928; the present membership of thousands is testimony to his foresight. For three years during the First World War he was controller of oils and chemical adviser to the Indian Munitions Board. It was mainly due to him and Sir Robert Robinson that the Microbiological Research Institute was founded in 1944 in Trinidad, as part of his enthusiasm for the development of Colonial resources.

Simonsen received the Kaiser-i-Hind Silver Medal in 1921, and a knighthood in 1949. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1932, received its Davy Medal in 1950, was the first recipient of the

Fritzsche Award of the American Chemical Society (1949), and his honorary degrees were D.Sc. of Birmingham and of Malaya, and LL.D. of St. Andrews. He served as honorary secretary of the Chemical Society (1945-49), of which he was later elected a vice-president; he was on the Council of the Royal Society of Arts, was honorary treasurer of the Laws Agricultural Trust, Rothamsted, and was on many committees.

His public and academic honours pleased but did not corrupt him, any more than did the material temptations of his Indian years: he remained an essentially simple, lovable man, behind a rather formal manner. Simonsen was, however, no slack master; the writer, when interviewed for a junior post, felt obliged to say that he would have quickly to seek a better-paid one: Simonsen replied, "Of course; if that were not so, you would not work and then you would be of no use to me". His teaching ability is shown by the fact that one honours class, at Bangor, of five students included two who were later to become professors of chemistry (E. R. H. Jones and W. C. Evans). Simonsen's opinions were always clear-cut and he did not hide them. Honesty, organic chemistry, verification before publication, credit where it was due, internationalism in science, but loyalty to one's country and one's friends were good: priority-hunting, sloppy experimentation, meanness, laziness, and the enemies of one's friends were bad. Though the Edwardian certainty is now out of fashion, Simonsen's ideals shine by contrast the brighter. But most memorable was his kindness; that was one reward he gave for service, not only immediately but also long after the service ceased; his advice and scientific help, however, were open to all; and many a young scientist, unknown to him previously, acknowledges in print the trouble Simonsen would take in seeking Colonial materials for him. It was only typical that the residue of his estate is destined, after the death of his widow, for the Royal Society's Scientific Relief Fund.

He married, in 1913, Dr. Janet Dick Hendrie, of Nairn, then in charge of the Lady Dufferin Hospital, Madras. Her charity of mind and very personal grace and charm made for him an ideal home in which he was happy and active to the end. R. S. CAHN

JOHN SIMONSEN was my oldest friend in academic circles and his passing breaks almost the last link with the palmy days when Perkin was at the height of his powers at the University of Manchester. He was one year senior to me, but we were close companions in the Schunck and Perkin (as now called) Laboratories for several years and even collaborated in a new attack on barbaloin. He was a most elegant experimentalist and the outcome of the work was a revision of the structures of aloemodin and rhein, the latter being recognized for the first time as a dihydroxyanthraquinonecarboxylic acid. In those early years he developed a most unusual talent for handling alicyclic substances and this led him into his brilliant excursions in the field of the higher terpene chemistry.

In later years and in company with Alexander King, we journeyed together to the Caribbean and initiated a successful antimalarial campaign in British Guiana and also a Microbiological Institute in Trinidad.

He was a most lovable person, incapable of any mean action, transparently sincere in all his relations, personal and scientific. It was a great privilege to enjoy his steadfast friendship for half a century, and I certainly owe more to him than I can well express, more probably than I realize. A modest man, easily under-estimated, he nevertheless was very firm in defence of his high standards and principles. I make no attempt to discuss the important discoveries he made, such as the carenes, or his public services, too numerous to mention. I only wish to pay a tribute to the memory of a warm-hearted, fair-minded and beloved friend. R. ROBINSON

NEWS and VIEWS

Atoms for Peace Award:

Prof. Niels Bohr, For.Mem.R.S.

PROF. NIELS BOHR, professor of theoretical physics at the University of Copenhagen, is to be the first recipient of the Atoms for Peace Award. He was unanimously selected from among seventy-five nominees representing twenty-three nations by the trustees of the Atoms for Peace Awards, meeting at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology on March 6. Atoms for Peace Awards, Inc., is a non-profit-making corporation set up, in response to President Eisenhower's appeal at the Geneva conference in July 1955, as a memorial to Henry and Edsel Ford. The Award, which consists of a gold medal together with an honorarium of 75,000 dollars, is to be granted annually—without regard for nationality or politics—for outstanding contributions to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

Born in 1885 in Copenhagen, Dr. Bohr came to England in 1912 to work with Rutherford at the University of Manchester on theories of atomic radiation. In 1913 he began to publish a series of papers, in which he enunciated the model of the quantized atom with which his name is always

associated. For his work on atomic structure and radiation theory he was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1922. In 1916, Prof. Bohr was appointed to the chair of theoretical physics at the University of Copenhagen. On his initiative the Institute for Theoretical Physics was opened there: he has since been its director.

In 1936 Prof. Bohr turned to nuclear physics and proposed a theory of nuclear reaction which successfully interpreted the experiments of Enrico Fermi and others on the interaction of neutrons with nuclei. During a visit to the United States in 1939, Prof. Bohr, in collaboration with Dr. J. A. Wheeler, contributed to the understanding of the nuclear fission observations of Otto Hahn and Lise Meitner by identifying the fissile isotope as uranium-235. Prof. Bohr returned to his Institute in Denmark in 1940. In October 1943 he was forced to flee his country, which had become occupied. He escaped to Sweden, hidden in a fishing boat, and from there he was flown in the bomb-bay of a Mosquito bomber to England. He went to the United States in December of that year to take part in the war-time atomic energy development. After the War, Prof. Bohr returned to