but no less interesting are the evidences of the Maya architect's methods of construction. Stairways and vaulted chambers, columns and platforms, and enormous substructures are eloquent of the skill of these vanished people.

The Chichen Itzá project of the Carnegie Institution had devoted four field seasons of some four and a half months each to work on the Warriors when the present volume was written. Work has been under the direction of Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley throughout, who not only planned but also directed

operations at Chichen. During the last twenty years, he has devoted himself to the Maya problem, and valuable results have been exemplified in his publications, as well as in the standing monument of the field work in Yucatan.

Few regions equal this strange promontory of the New World in opportunity for archaeological investigation. The surface has only been scratched. Individuals and institutions able to share in the unravelling of problems in Yucatan, a chapter of the history of mankind, are to be envied.

Obituary.

PROF. PERCY GROOM, M.B.E., F.R.S.

THROUGH the death of Prof. Percy Groom, which occurred at Gerrard's Cross on Sept. 16, there has passed away a man with an outlook and interests somewhat exceptional in the senior ranks of British botanists. He was born on Sept. 12, 1865, and entered Mason College, Birmingham, as a student, from which he passed to Cambridge on being elected to an exhibition at Trinity College. He obtained a first class in Part I. and a second in Part II. of the Tripos in 1887, taking botany as his principal subject. Afterwards he was elected to a Frank Smart studentship in botany at Caius College.

During his student life Groom studied for a time at the University of Bonn, where he enjoyed the friendship of the botanists, headed by the eminent Prof. Strasburger, who were making that university the Mecca of so many of the English-speaking followers of the science. He owed much to A. F. W. Schimper, and a delightful appreciation of that gifted man appears as a foreword to the translation of Schimper's "Plant Geography", revised by Bayley Balfour and himself, which was published by the Clarendon Press in 1903. In 1889 he was appointed to the professorship of botany and arboriculture at the Imperial College of Whampoa, in China, and it was doubtless largely owing to this that he was led to turn his attention to the study of trees, and thence to their diseases and economic products, on which he largely concentrated his attention in after years.

On returning to England in 1892, Groom settled for some years in Oxford, migrating to Edinburgh in 1898 to take charge of the classes in plant-physiology under Prof. Bayley Balfour. His stay there was short, as he was appointed in the following year to the headship of the biological department in the Royal Indian Engineering College at Coopers Hill, in succession to Marshall Ward, and on the closing down of that College he came to London as head of the department of botany at the Northern Polytechnic. In 1908 he joined the staff at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, first as an assistant professor, and was promoted to the chair of the technology of woods and fibres in 1911, an appointment he held to the end of his life.

Groom was the author of several books, and he contributed a number of papers, mainly on the

anatomy of flowering plants, to various scientific journals, but as time went on he became more and more identified with the 'applied side' of his subject, publishing many papers in various technical journals on timber and forestry topics, as well as on the various diseases which affect wood under the numerous and diverse conditions under which it is employed. He served as a member of many committees concerned with these various matters, and his assistance was often sought by those engaged in industry, as well as by various government departments. One of his last papers was written for the Public Record Office, entitled "A Preliminary Investigation on the Mildew of Book-covers in Relation to Humidity and Temperature of the Air", and this investigation was still going on when he died. His work was recognised by his election to the fellowship of the Royal Society in 1924.

Groom's lectures at the Imperial College, especially those on timber for engineers and others interested in the technical side of the subject, were valued and were well attended. His place will not easily be filled, and as a colleague he will be held in affectionate remembrance by all who knew him.

J. B. F.

SIR WILLIAM SIMPSON, C.M.G.

By the death of Sir William Simpson on Sept. 20, after a few days' illness, a great exponent of tropical hygiene has passed away. William John Ritchie Simpson was born in Aberdeen, in 1855, where, after schooling in Jersey, he became a medical student, qualifying in 1876 and taking the M.D. degree four years later. He determined to choose public health as a career, and soon became the first medical officer of health of his native city and lecturer on hygiene in the University.

These posts were relinquished in 1886, when Simpson was appointed chief health officer in Calcutta, a position he held for twelve years, and thenceforward his life was devoted to the advancement of tropical hygiene and medicine. Returning to England, Simpson was elected, in 1898, professor of hygiene in King's College, London, and in 1899 was associated with the late Sir Patrick Manson and others in the foundation of the London School of Tropical Medicine, of which he became one of the lecturers.

From now onwards Simpson was almost con-

tinuously engaged in official inquiries into the health of various parts of the tropical dominions of the British Empire. In 1900-1 he was a member of a commission to inquire into the occurrence of dysentery and enteric fever in South Africa and was chief commissioner dealing with an outbreak of plague in Cape Colony, and in 1902 was asked to report upon the causes and continuance of plague in Hong Kong. In 1906 he studied the sanitary conditions of Singapore, in 1908 those of West Africa, of East Africa, Uganda, and Zanzibar in 1913-14, and of the mines and villages of the Gold Coast in 1924. As the outcome of extensive studies on plague, he delivered the Croonian Lectures on this subject at the Royal College of Physicians, London, in 1907.

Simpson was a prolific writer. In addition to many papers and addresses, he published a treatise on plague, a volume on the principles of hygiene in tropical and subtropical climates—the first authoritative work of its kind—and a smaller popular book on the maintenance of health in the tropics. When in India, he edited the *Indian Medical Gazette*, and afterwards was responsible for the *Journal of Tropical Medicine*. In his later years, Simpson was one of the founders of the Ross Institute for Tropical Diseases, in which he became director of

tropical hygiene. Here his last work was done, and he died in its hospital.

The services of Simpson were recognised by the bestowal of numerous distinctions: the C.M.G. in 1909, the Order of St. Sava of Serbia, where he had served during the War, in 1918, and the honour of knighthood in 1923. A genial and kindly man, though a strong one when occasion required, he will be greatly missed by a large circle of fellow-workers.

R. T. HEWLETT.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:—

Sir J. Hawtrey Benson, formerly president of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, and also medical adviser for Ireland for the Colonial Office, on Oct. 9, aged eighty-eight years.

Dr. Thomas A. Edison, world-renowned for his inventions connected with the phonograph, telegraphic and telephonic communication, and the incandescent electric lamp, on Oct. 18, aged eighty-four years.

Dr. Samuel W. Stratton, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, Mass., who was Director of the U.S. Bureau of Standards from 1901 until 1923, on Oct. 19, aged seventy years.

News and Views.

It is reported in the daily Press that Dr. J. Papish, assistant professor of chemical spectroscopy at Cornell University, has identified the element of atomic number 87 in samarskite. It is stated to occur to the extent of one part in two million. This element would appear to be the missing alkali following caesium. The radioactive properties of the element, if any, should be interesting.

ALTHOUGH the recent agitation against the initiation of girls among the Kikuyu of Kenya has now subsided to a great extent, the causes which lay at its root are still operative. It affords an extremely instructive example of how, in dealing with native peoples, the best intentions may often prove positively harmful if not based on a thorough and sympathetic understanding of the full implication of native custom. For example, one point which was raised in the recent trouble by the missionaries was the excessive 'price' demanded in marriage by parents of native girls, which has led to a decrease in marriage and an increase in prostitution, with a related spread of venereal disease. It is, however, pointed out by Mr. L. S. B. Leakey, who discusses the whole situation in a communication in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 61, Jan.-June 1931, that to a great extent the missionaries have only themselves to blame, in consequence of the requirement that the parents of the girl should sign a certificate at marriage that the whole of the 'bride-price' has been paid. This departure from native custom of a payment on account at marriage with a subsequent settlement by instalments, instead of protecting the bridegroom from a parent's ex-

tortion, as it was intended, has deterred young men from marriage and has forced up the 'bride-price'. Mr. Leakey shows how misunderstanding of the character of the initiation customs and their implications, as well as mistranslation of passages in the Scriptures relating to the Virgin Mary arising out of this misunderstanding, brought about a situation which was politically dangerous and has resulted in the moral and physical deterioration of the native. Unfortunately, in present conditions, difficulties such as these are inevitable, yet they are due to causes which might easily be avoided: when the right course is pointed out by those who have the requisite knowledge, it is usually too late. Once there has been a break in tribal custom it is often impossible, as in the present case, to revert to the old law.

ON Oct. 29 occurs the centenary of the birth of the distinguished American geologist and palaeontologist, Othniel Charles Marsh. Born at Lockport, New York, Marsh graduated from Yale College in 1860, and after studying geology and mineralogy at the Sheffield Scientific School, studied palaeontology and anatomy in Berlin, Heidelberg, and Breslau, and travelled in various parts of Europe. Returning to America in 1866, he became professor of palaeontology at Yale College and also Director of the Geological and Palaeontological Department of the Natural History Museum founded by the philanthropist Peabody, who was Marsh's uncle. For many years he was connected with the United States Geological Survey; he organised many expeditions to the far west, then a somewhat inaccessible region, and in 1871 discovered