Patrick, brave and modest, has occurred in the prime of life, at the early age of thirty-seven years; his departure will be deplored by a large circle of friends.

PROF. R. RAMSAY WRIGHT

WE regret to record the death on September 5 of Robert Ramsay Wright, emeritus professor of biology in the University of Toronto. Prof. Wright was a child of the manse and was born at Alloa, Scotland, in the year 1853. His early education was obtained at the Edinburgh High School, whence he proceeded to the University of Edinburgh, receiving in due time the degrees of M.A. (1871) and B.Sc. (1873). He acted for a time as assistant to the professor of natural history at Edinburgh, but in 1874 he was called to the University of Toronto to succeed Prof. H. A. Nicholson in the chair of natural history, his title being later changed to professor of biology.

Prof. Wright proved to be an attractive and inspiring teacher, and early introduced practical instruction on the lines developed by Huxley and Martin. The growth of his department soon called for more suitable accommodation than was at first available, and he planned and carried to completion the erection of a Biological Building, which included an unusually complete teaching Museum of Zoology and from which Departments of Botany and Physiology later budded off. His administrative abilities led to his appointment in 1901 to the office of vice-president of the University, an office which he retained until his retirement from active service in 1912, when he returned to Great Britain and took up his residence in Oxford.

Administrative duties seriously interfered with

Prof. Wright's marked ability for research, shown by his early contributions to Canadian helminthology and later by his studies of the so-called auditory apparatus of the siluroid fishes. With the collaboration of some former pupils, he published a polygraph of the anatomy of the catfish (*Amiurus catus*), he himself supplying the sections on the nervous system and sense organs. But his interests were very broad; he was a musician of no mean order and an exceptional linguist; indeed, his latest completed work was a translation of a Persian medical MS. by al-Biruni.

Recognition of Prof. Wright's attainments was frequent, both from Canada and from his motherland. He received the honorary degree of LL.D. from Edinburgh and Toronto and an honorary M.A. from Oxford. He was president of the Canadian Institute in 1893-95 and contributed on occasion to its *Proceedings*; he was a charter fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and its president in 1910-11, and as an original member of the Biological Board of Canada he played an important part in the establishment and development of that organisation. Canadian biology owes much to his enthusiasm, his stimulating teaching and his scholarship. J. P. McM.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Sir Arthur Mayo-Robson, K.B.E., C.B., C.V.O., emeritus professor of surgery in the University of Leeds, and honorary president of the Surgical Section of the Thirteenth International Medical Congress in Paris in 1900, on October 12, aged eighty years.

The Hon. Lady Parsons, widow of the late Sir Charles Parsons, and one of the founders of the Women's Engineering Society, on October 16.

News and Views

Centenary of Alfred Nobel, 1833-1896

ON October 21 occurs the centenary of the birth of Alfred Bernhard Nobel, the eminent Swedish engineer, inventor and industrialist, who left the greater part of his fortune to found the Nobel prizes. He was the third of the four sons of Emmanuel Nobel (1801-72) who for many years had works in St. Petersburg, where contracts were carried out for the Russian government, and like his brothers, Alfred was trained in his father's shops. At an early age, his attention was attracted to the subject of explosives, which had entered upon a new phase of development through the invention in 1846 of gun-cotton by Schönbein and of nitro-glycerine by Sobrero in the following year. Experimenting with these new substances, Nobel discovered that nitro-glycerine can be detonated by a small charge of fulminate of mercury, and next found that by mixing nitro-glycerine with the porous earth kieselguhr, he could produce an explosive in a form which could be

handled easily and safely. To this substance, which he patented in Sweden on September 19, 1867, he gave the name 'dynamite'. In later years he produced blasting gelatine, ballistite and other explosives, for the manufacture of which works were erected in many parts of the world. Some of Nobel's wealth was derived from his association with his elder brothers, Hjalmar Nobel (1829-1896) and Ludwig Nobel (1831-1888) in their remarkable exploitation of the Baku oil fields and their methods of transporting oil by pipe lines, tank cars and tank steamers. Nobel's death took place at San Remo on December 10, 1896, and by a will which was signed in 1895, about £1,400,000 became available for the foundation of the famous prizes awarded annually for notable work done in physics, chemistry, medicine or physiology, and literature and in the cause of peace. The first awards were made on December 10, 1901, five years after Nobel's death.