

Obituary Notices

Prof. H. B. Fantham

THE death of Prof. Harold Benjamin Fantham, Strathcona professor of zoology and head of the Department of Zoology at McGill University, Montreal, on October 26, in his sixtieth year, has removed one who was widely known for his many contributions to the subject of parasitology.

Prof. Fantham was educated at University College, London, where he was gold medallist in zoology and Derby research scholar, at the Royal College of Science, London, and at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he was twice Darwin research prizeman. He was a fellow of University College, London, and also a member of many scientific societies. In addition to some 150 research papers published in various scientific journals, he was joint author of "The Animal Parasites of Man", in which he wrote the section on Protozoa, and also published a popular book, "On Some Minute Animal Parasites", in collaboration with Dr. A. Porter.

From 1904 onwards, Prof. Fantham was mainly engaged in university teaching, first in London, where he made various contributions to protozoology, especially in connexion with Haplosporidia and the molluscan spirochaetes, and afterwards in Cambridge, where he was assistant to the Quick professor of biology, and conducted work in connexion with the grouse disease inquiry. From there he joined the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, where he worked on trypanosomes and spirochaetes, and in conjunction with Prof. J. W. W. Stephens gave the first account of *Trypanosoma rhodesiense*.

During the early part of the Great War, Prof. Fantham acted as parasitologist, and went to Egypt and Salonika where he contracted amœbic dysentery and was invalided home. In 1917 he was appointed as the first professor of zoology and comparative anatomy in the new University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, where he not only organized and developed the Department, but also took a very active part in many university activities, being dean of the faculty of science and also for one year a member of the Council of the University. Whilst in South Africa he was closely associated with the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, and in 1927 was president of the Association, when his address on "Some Thoughts on Biology and the Race" was the subject of an editorial article in NATURE of September 10, 1927. In addition, he continued to publish papers, mainly on South African parasitic Protozoa and soil Protozoa.

In January 1933, Prof. Fantham took charge of the Zoological Department at McGill University, Montreal, and at once threw himself with enthusiasm into the task of reorganizing the Department. In addition, he continued research work on Protozoa and eugenics as well as on freshwater biology, and

made special efforts to develop this side of zoological ecology in the province of Quebec.

From the time of his arrival at McGill University, Fantham stimulated the interest of his students, not only those doing advanced work, but also the juniors, with the result that his Department grew continuously in numbers, particularly in research workers. He knew every student personally in his large Department, and would always help in personal as well as academic matters. As a tribute of him they wrote: "The University has lost a Department head, a professor and a colleague—but the students of the University mourn the passing of a friend".

Prof. Fantham is survived by his devoted wife and former student, Dr. Annie Porter, herself a well-known biologist, who co-operated with him in many of his undertakings.

Dr. J. A. Voelcker, C.I.E.

DR. JOHN AUGUSTUS VOELCKER, who died on November 6 at eighty-three years of age, was almost the last representative of the group of men whose work in the application of chemistry to the development of agriculture was of very great importance in the second half of the nineteenth century. The son of Dr. Augustus Voelcker, himself one of the most eminent of the group of agricultural chemists referred to, he was trained to succeed his father, first at University College, London, then at Giessen, and finally at Cambridge. After this he joined the laboratory which his father had established in London. This laboratory was unique at the time, and the methods used there, to which Dr. Voelcker adhered during almost all his life, have become very largely the standards used in similar laboratories all over the world.

On the death of his father in 1884, Dr. Voelcker had, at the age of thirty, the very difficult job of succeeding to the latter's consulting practice and to a number of the public positions which were held by his father. He rose to the occasion, and was for many years the principal and almost undisputed authority on questions of the application of chemistry to agriculture. Perhaps the climax of his career came when he was invited by the Government of India to visit that country and report on the scientific improvement of Indian agriculture. His visit there, in the years 1889-90, was a great success, and his report was the basis for the foundation of scientific work in connexion with agriculture in India. It remains to this day a classic.

When Dr. Voelcker succeeded his father in 1884, he also took over the position of consulting chemist to the Royal Agricultural Society of England, which he retained until his death. His annual reports in this connexion, of which the series is almost unbroken,