

Obituary.

DR. J. G. LEATHEM.

THE death of Dr. John Gaston Leathem on March 19, at the age of nearly fifty-two years, removes a scholar who was prominent in the world of Cambridge mathematics. Coming from Queen's College, Belfast, in 1891, he made his mark in the triposes of 1894 and 1895. He held the Isaac Newton studentship for astronomy and physical optics during the period 1896-99, soon gaining also a fellowship at St. John's College. His interests were then mainly in electrodynamic theory; and the work of his studentship produced a memoir (*Phil. Trans.*, 1897, pp. 89-127) which ought to be classical, in which the theory of the magneto-optic rotation of light and the cognate reflection effect were finally systematised and coordinated, under the test of laborious comparisons with the numerical experimental data.

In due course Dr. Leathem became mathematical lecturer at St. John's College, and afterwards university lecturer: and for a series of years he exerted a wide influence on the teaching. For the mathematical tripos he was an examiner on as many as six occasions, two of them (1912, 1913) after he had been withdrawn from all teaching except an annual advanced course on electrodynamics. For he had become senior bursar of his college in 1908, and henceforth he threw himself into its external affairs and general administration with assiduity and practical success.

In 1905 Dr. Leathem took up the editorship, in conjunction with Prof. E. T. Whittaker, of a series of Mathematical Tracts projected by a Cambridge group of lecturers, which, in numerous volumes, has become under their care an important survey, almost an encyclopædia, of domains of recent higher mathematics. To this undertaking he contributed the earliest volume of the series, and one on optical systems. His own later special investigations, exhibiting the geometrical trend that is associated with the Irish school, thus including applications of conformal transformations to physical problems, were published mainly by the London Mathematical Society and the Royal Irish Academy. A note in *Roy. Soc. Proc.* established an unexpected mode of interaction between a magnet, supposed to consist of revolving electron-systems, and a varying electric field, too small, however, to permit of experimental scrutiny.

During the War Dr. Leathem felt bound to volunteer for work in the Research Department at Woolwich Arsenal, then in need of mathematical help, handing over as much of his bursarial work as was possible to senior colleagues. About two years ago he had to submit to a sudden and very drastic surgical operation: in time he recovered, and though never strong again, he resumed his activities with all the previous zeal and judgment. But the mischief could only be delayed, not removed: and his loss will now be deeply felt not only in his own college but also throughout the university.

J. L.

DR. E. A. MERCK.

THE death took place at Darmstadt on February 25 of Privy Councillor Dr. E. A. Merck, senior partner of the chemical works of E. Merck. Dr. Merck was born

at Darmstadt on July 30, 1855; he studied pharmacology and chemistry, and took his degree in Freiburg i. B. under Ad. Claus. He then took over the *Engel-apotheke*, which had been in the possession of the family of Merck since 1668, and became one of the managers of the chemical works of E. Merck.

The works, which were then on only a modest scale, were greatly enlarged through the energy and initiative of Dr. Merck and his cousin, Louis Merck, who was his partner, and developed into one of the greatest manufacturing of preparations for medical purposes. To the production of drugs was added that of alkaloids, the preparation of synthetic remedies (for example, "veronal"), and various sera. In response to the demand of chemists for pure reagents, the production of chemically pure preparations and solutions for volumetric analysis was taken in hand, and the firm's products became famous throughout the world. The connexion between the industry of chemical preparations on one hand and the pharmaceutical chemists and physicians on the other was steadily maintained by the literary publications: "*Mercks Jahresbericht*," "*Mercks Index*," and "*Mercks Reagenzienverzeichnis*."

Dr. Merck took an important part in all these developments. At the same time he worked continually for the improvement of the training of pharmaceutical chemists and the social position of the whole chemical profession. For six successive years he was president of the *Verein Deutscher Chemiker*, and he represented German chemistry at many international gatherings. His strong historical interest led him to give particular attention to the work of Liebig, and he was one of the founders of the Liebig Museum at Giessen.

We regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. A. S. Dogiel, professor of histology in the University of Petrograd, whose investigations on the histology of the peripheral nervous system are well known.

Prof. A. S. Flint, emeritus astronomer of the Washburn Observatory, University of Wisconsin, on February 22, aged sixty-nine.

Prof. W. S. Haines, professor of chemistry, materia medica, and toxicology at Rush Medical College, and professor of toxicology in the University of Chicago, on January 27, aged seventy-two.

Sir Joseph M'Grath, a vice-president of the Royal Dublin Society, and registrar of the National University of Ireland since 1908, on March 15, aged sixty-four.

Mr. W. Pearson, for nearly fifty-eight years professor to the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, on March 15, aged eighty-two.

Sir Thomas Roddick, formerly professor of surgery, McGill University, and the first Colonial president of the British Medical Association, at its Montreal meeting in 1897, on February 20, aged seventy-six.

Sir William Thorburn, emeritus professor of clinical surgery in the University of Manchester, on March 18, aged sixty-one.

Prof. J. Trowbridge, emeritus professor of physics at Harvard University, on February 18, aged seventy-nine.

Mr. E. W. Vredenburg, of the Geological Survey of India, on March 12.

Prof. N. E. Wedensky, professor of physiology in the University of Petrograd.