

Obituary.

DR. W. B. BLAIKIE.

WALTER BIGGAR BLAIKIE, LL.D., who died on May 3, was an extremely well-known figure in Edinburgh circles. Born in 1847, the son of a remarkable mother, his death severs a link with a past period. Educated at Edinburgh Academy, and the Universities of Edinburgh and Brussels, he began life as a railway engineer in the Public Works Department in India. He returned to Edinburgh after his marriage and joined the firm of T. and A. Constable, printers, with whom he remained associated until his retirement a few years ago.

In each of these very different professional tasks Blaikie showed the same remarkable vitality and intellectual energy. In particular he raised the productions of Constable's to a very high stage of artistic excellence. He was also warmly interested in the infirmary and other good works in Edinburgh. But besides, his activity overflowed into two channels in special, Scottish history and astronomy. In matters of history he was a recognised authority on special points and local history; in particular his "Itinerary of Prince Charles Edward" shows infinite pains in verifying details. In astronomy his interest was direct and original, especially in what he could himself create, preferably with his own hands. He devised numerous ingenious methods of prosecuting 'astronomy without a telescope.' He used to draw, print, and issue annually to his friends a book of monthly star maps, showing the position of the moon and planets, with tabular particulars. These issues were supplemented in different years by appendices on such subjects as the names of the stars, the fables of the constellations, etc., the product of a considerable amount of accurate, original work.

Perhaps the best of all Blaikie's devices was a graphical method of solving many common cases of spherical triangles, by means of two circular discs, engraved on celluloid, with two nests of coaxial circles, and rotatable about a common centre. By means of this, for example, the hour angle of a known star can be read at once from the usual observed data of a theodolite without engaging in any calculations. Blaikie preserved all his life a singularly boyish activity, so that, though actually he died at an advanced age, he never seemed to his many friends an old man. R. A. S.

PROF. WILHELM VON BRANCA.

THE eminent geologist and palæontologist, Prof. Wilhelm von Branca, died in Munich on Mar. 12, aged eighty-three years. Descended from an old Lombardy family, he was born in Potsdam on Sept. 9, 1844, and graduated as Ph.D. at Heidelberg in 1876. He began his academic career as *docent* in the University of Berlin in 1881, and his first professorship of geology and palæontology was in Königsberg in 1887. He succeeded Quenstedt in Tübingen in 1890, and was next for a short time at the Agricultural High School at Hohenheim.

Finally, he succeeded Dames in Berlin in 1899, and remained there until his retirement in 1917.

Branca's earliest researches were in vulcanology, and he continued to be actively interested in the study of extinct volcanoes until 1894, when he published his well-known account of 125 'volcano-embryos' in Würtemberg. In stratigraphical geology, he added much to our knowledge of the Jurassic formations. In palæontology, he will be remembered for his researches on the initial chamber and the development of the suture lines in cephalopod shells, and for his memoirs on the ganoid fish *Lepidotus* and various other extinct vertebrates. As director of the geological-palæontological institute in the University of Berlin, he encouraged the systematic collection of fossils, and he was largely responsible for organising the expedition to German East Africa (now Tanganyika Territory) which made so many important discoveries of Dinosauria.

Branca was also an inspiring teacher, beloved by his numerous pupils, and throughout his career he exerted an important influence on the promotion of geological science in Germany.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Henri Bosmans, of the Jesuit College of Saint-Michel, at Brussels, author of many papers relating mainly to fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth century mathematicians, whose works are not generally accessible, on Feb. 3, aged seventy-six years.

Dr. C. G. Cumston, president in 1925 of the International Congress of the History of Medicine and author of "An Introduction to the History of Medicine," on April 14, aged fifty-nine years.

Prof. Julius Hirschwald, who occupied the chair of mineralogy at the Technische Hochschule in Berlin from 1877 until 1921, aged eighty-three years.

Dr. John P. Munson, head of the department of biology at the Washington State Teachers' College, distinguished for his work in comparative cytology, on Feb. 27, aged sixty-eight years.

Mrs. Flora Wambaugh Patterson, formerly mycologist in charge of the pathological collections, U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, on Feb. 5, aged eighty years.

Prof. W. W. Payne, of the observatory of the National Watch Company, Elgin, Ill., and founder of *Popular Astronomy*, on Jan. 29, aged ninety years.

Dr. E. C. Schroeder, superintendent of the Experiment Station of the Bureau of Animal Industry, United States Department of Agriculture, who had made important contributions to our knowledge of animal diseases, on Jan. 24, aged sixty-two years.

Mr. W. C. Tait, of Oporto, Portugal, author of "The Birds of Portugal" and a pioneer in the introduction of the eucalyptus tree in Portugal, aged eighty-three years.

Dr. Willard P. Ward, of Savannah, Georgia, known for his work on the metallurgy of manganese, on Jan. 17, aged eighty-two years.

Dr. Theodor Zincke, professor of chemistry in the University of Marburg from 1875 until 1913, author of a large number of publications, particularly in the field of aromatic chemistry, on Mar. 17, aged eighty-four years.