

Obituary.

DR. JOHN RENNIE.

BY the sudden death of Dr. John Rennie, of the University of Aberdeen, on Aug. 30, zoology has lost an investigator of high quality. Educated at Aberdeen under the late Prof. Alleyne Nicholson and others, Dr. John Rennie became in 1899 chief assistant to Prof. J. Arthur Thomson, and he so continued until 1917, when he was promoted to be lecturer in parasitology and experimental zoology, and was put at the head of a laboratory of his own. He had previously become lecturer in agricultural zoology in the College of Agriculture, and he was also in charge of the nature-study classes at the Training College.

Dr. Rennie had great gifts as a teacher, for he was singularly clear in his lecturing, thorough, deliberate in manner, and of unruffled patience. He had a discernment of profitable problems to work at, for one of his early successes was an account of the minute structure of the Islands of Langerhans, which he had found in sharply defined form in some teleostean fishes. Along with a physician, he began trying the effect of extract of these Islands on diabetic patients, a distant hint of insulin treatment. For various reasons, especially the difficulty of steady supply, this experiment was not carried far.

In connexion with his agricultural work, Dr. Rennie became much interested in entomology, and this led him, along with Mr. John Anderson, lecturer in bee-keeping in the College of Agriculture, to attack the problem of Isle-of-Wight disease in hive-bees. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. A. H. E. Wood, of Glassel, one of the leading apiarists in Scotland, Dr. Rennie was able to secure the assistance of Dr. Bruce White, who worked in Prof. Shennan's Pathological Laboratory, and of Miss Elsie Harvey, who worked in his own. It was a

case of team-work, for it was Dr. Bruce White who first recognised the significance of the tracheal mite, *Acarapis woodi*, and it was Dr. Rennie who demonstrated convincingly the causal relation between the mite and the disease. At this time he was working far too hard, examining thousands of bees, week after week, and he probably weakened his never robust, though carefully husbanded, health. In the last two or three years Dr. Rennie was working at the curative treatment of Isle-of-Wight disease and had made some important steps.

Dr. Rennie had many friends, won to him by his quiet, unassuming ways, his sincerity and reliability, and his unflinching generosity to other workers. His researches were marked by their high standard of precision and by their cautious thoroughness. Dr. Rennie was about sixty-three years of age; he is survived by a widow, three daughters, and a son. A month or so ago his eldest daughter was married to Dr. Norman Wright, of the West of Scotland Agricultural College.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Dr. Jean Brèthes, entomologist at the National Museum of Natural History, Buenos Aires, on July 2.

Mr. Charles Curtis, superintendent from 1884 until 1903 of the Botanic Gardens at Penang, on Aug. 16, aged seventy-five years.

Prof. E. C. Grey, formerly professor of chemistry in the University of Cairo, who carried out investigations for the League of Nations on the food problems of Japan and was known for his work on the chemistry of fermentation, on Aug. 10.

Prof. Wilhelm Wien, professor of experimental physics in the University of Munich, editor of *Annalen der Physik* and of "Handbuch der Experimentalphysik," who was a distinguished worker on the nature of cathode and canal rays, aged sixty-four years.

News and Views.

THE brochure entitled "Broadcast English I. Recommendations to announcers regarding certain words of doubtful pronunciation," which was recently published by the British Broadcasting Corporation, is a scholarly production, and one that should appeal to a wider audience than that for which it is primarily intended. Though the pen is the able one of Mr. A. Lloyd James, of the School of Oriental Studies, the voice is that of the expert committee, which includes, among others, the Poet Laureate and Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, and was appointed by the Corporation in 1926. Speech, it is pointed out, is governed by local convention and public taste, and although most people think there are right and wrong ways of speaking, these adjectives are only applicable where the different considerations of propriety all lead to the same conclusion. "The higher a community climbs in the social scale, the greater is the uniformity in its speech." There is no standard pronunciation of English, so there cannot be one and only one right way of pronunciation. Our language is rich in alternative pronunciations of equal authority, and

the task of the B.B.C. has been that of deciding between them. The special difficulties of the task originate in the discrepancy between sound and written symbol, the presence of many foreign words, the relationship between the value of a symbol in the modern language and the value it had in a classical tongue, and the absence of any principle to govern the incidence of stress.

THE task of the Committee, it will be admitted, was not easy, and if one does not agree with all the findings—unanimity was not expected—the main principles of selection, as set out in the booklet, will probably meet with little criticism. The recommendations, having the praiseworthy object of providing some measure of uniformity in the pronunciation of English, will be welcomed by scientific men, who will be particularly interested in those which relate to words, often troublesome to pronounce, that are frequently used by them. Among such words are the following (a doubled vowel letter indicates a long vowel sound, and a double-consonant letter