

## MR. H. F. BIGGS

WE regret to record the death at Oxford on January 9 after a short illness of Mr. Henry Francis Biggs, whose place in the University as a tutor in physics will be difficult to fill. In spite of severe calls on his time and energy in the fulfilment of his academic work, he took a keen interest in the latest developments of physics, and contributed to the columns of this journal and to other scientific journals. His main published works are an "Introductory Sketch on Wave Mechanics" and a monograph on "The Electromagnetic Field", the latter of which appeared only a few days before his death.

Mr. Biggs went to Oxford in 1919 as a demonstrator in the Electrical Laboratory under Prof. J. S. E. Townsend, and took an active part in the teaching of physics in the University. He had a varied experience of academic life, having studied at Trinity College, Dublin, and at Cambridge, and

having held a lectureship at the South African College (now the University of Cape Town), and later a lectureship at the University of Manchester. During the War he was attached to a sound ranging unit, where his theoretical knowledge, his practical skill and inventive ability found abundant scope.

Mr. Biggs will be greatly missed by his pupils and colleagues, who will long cherish the memory of a cultured, courteous and interesting personality.

WE regret to announce the following deaths :

Sir William Lawrence, treasurer of the Royal Horticultural Society, 1924-29, formerly lecturer in organic chemistry in the University of Manchester, on January 4, aged sixty-three years.

Sir Donald MacAlister, K.C.B., Chancellor of the University of Glasgow since 1929, and president of the General Medical Council in 1904-31, on January 15, aged seventy-nine years.

## News and Views

## Dr. Harlow Shapley

THE Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society has been awarded to Dr. Harlow Shapley for his studies of the structure and dimensions of the galactic system. Dr. Shapley, who was born on November 2, 1885, has been director of Harvard College Observatory and Paine professor of astronomy at Harvard since 1921, succeeding E. C. Pickering. He is known particularly for his development of the period-luminosity law of the relation between the period of variation and the absolute magnitude of Cepheid variable stars. The apparent magnitude of the Cepheid variables in a globular cluster is measured and compared with the known absolute magnitude of a Cepheid of the same period, and from this the distance of the cluster is obtained immediately, provided absorption of light in interstellar space is negligible. In 1915-18 he published a noteworthy series of papers on researches on the globular clusters which brought these objects prominently before astronomers. His principal results were brought together in 1930 in his "Star Clusters". Dr. Shapley's investigations have been applied at Mount Wilson by Dr. E. P. Hubble to measure the distances of the spiral nebulae. Recent papers from the Harvard College Observatory have discussed the distribution of the galaxies and the uniformity of distribution of matter in space. Dr. Shapley is a member of the United States National Academy of Sciences and an associate of the Royal Astronomical Society.

## Colwyn Gold Medal of the Institution of the Rubber Industry

THE Colwyn Gold Medal of the Institution of the Rubber Industry has been awarded to Dr. O. de Vries, until 1930, director of the Rubber Station, Buitenzorg, for scientific work in connexion with the production of raw rubber. The medal was presented to Dr. de Vries by Sir George Beharrell, president of

the Institution, on the occasion of the twelfth annual general meeting of the Institution held on January 12. Dr. O. de Vries has devoted the best part of two decades to the investigation of plantation rubber problems. His work at the Buitenzorg Testing Station in Java brought world wide fame not only to the Testing Station but also to himself. It covered a large number of problems of various types which arise between the growing of the tree and the eventual vulcanisation of the rubber in the distant factories. He cleared up many obscure plantation practices, indicating the reason, if any, for their existence. Dr. de Vries overhauled and set new standards in methods for testing plantation rubber. His investigations contributed to the further standardisation of plantation rubber and its characteristics in respect to vulcanisation and mechanical qualities. The principal aspect of Dr. de Vries's work has been his desire to ensure its availability throughout the world. The result of his investigations were published in Dutch, but with a generous disregard for the labour entailed, the publication of each investigation was accompanied by a version in English. Similarly in 1920 he produced an English translation of his well-known book on "Estate Rubber", the original Dutch version of which appeared in the following year. This book is a lasting monument to his activities.

## Early Man in China

FURTHER exploration at Choukoutien has resulted in discoveries which, if less sensational than that of Peking man, are none the less of considerable importance as additions to our knowledge of the distribution of palaeolithic industries and of 'modern man' in late pleistocene times. According to Prof. Davidson Black's report on field-work at Choukoutien in 1933, which was presented at the annual meeting of the Geological Society of China on November 11, and appears in this issue of NATURE (p. 89), Dr. W. C.