

Obituary

DR. BERTHOLD LAUFER

THE death is reported of Dr. Berthold Laufer, of the Anthropological Department of the Field Museum, Chicago, and one of the foremost authorities on the art and antiquities of China. Berthold Laufer was born in Cologne on October 11, 1874, and was educated at the University of Berlin and at Leipzig, where he took his Ph.D. in 1897. In 1898-99 he travelled in Siberia as a member of the Jesup Expedition to the North Pacific and in 1901-4 was in China with the expedition of the Eastern Asiatic Committee. In 1904 he joined the staff of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, where he remained until 1908, acting, from 1905 until 1907, as a lecturer in anthropology at Columbia University. After spending the two years 1908-10 in Tibet and China with the Blackstone expedition, he was appointed in 1911 a curator in the Anthropological Department of the Field Museum, Chicago, a position which he retained until his death. He continued to travel in China at intervals during this, the most fruitful period of his life, and the collections of the Field Museum benefited enormously not only from his success as a collector of objects of ancient Chinese art, but also from his unrivalled knowledge of Chinese antiquities.

One of Laufer's most successful journeys was that on which he led the Marshal Field Expedition to China in 1923. His knowledge of the history of the domesticated plants and animals of China proved invaluable to the mission sent out by the National Research Council under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Laufer was a voluminous writer, and produced a large number of very fully illustrated monographs on Buddhist and Tibetan literature, and Chinese archaeology and ethnology, of which the best known are perhaps those dealing with ancient pottery, bronzes, jades and precious stones.

Laufer was exceptionally gifted as an orientalist, and his knowledge of the Chinese language and literature was of the greatest assistance to him in his work on Chinese antiquities; but in his writings on Chinese culture, whether dealing with objects of art or with the common objects of everyday life, such as agricultural implements or domesticated plants, he showed that he had at his complete command a wide range of knowledge of the material culture of other peoples of the world. While this added to the scholarly character and the value as comparative studies of his work, it led him at times, in the view of some, to be over-bold in speculation.

MR. H. A. ALLEN

HENRY ATTWOOL ALLEN, a former member of the staff of H.M. Geological Survey, died on October 3 at the age of seventy-nine years. Since 1919 he had been living in retirement at Eastbourne. Allen joined the Geological Survey as a temporary officer in 1875, and was attached to the Palaeontological Department (then under the late Mr. E. T. Newton) in 1892, with the old title of 'assistant naturalist'. Here he was occupied with curatorial work on the fossils in the Museum at Jermyn Street, London, and he compiled several useful lists of types and figured specimens. These lists were published in successive numbers of the "Summary of Progress" of the Survey. He also took part in the identification of fossils collected during the progress of the Survey, his work in this direction being incorporated in sundry memoirs.

Before his retirement, Allen was a well-known figure on excursions of the Geologists' Association, and for some years acted as editor of the *Proceedings* of that body. He served on the Council of the Geological Society in 1911-15.

News and Views

The Retirement of Prof. A. Fowler, F.R.S.

A COMPLIMENTARY dinner to Prof. A. Fowler on his retirement after fifty-two years' association with the Royal College of Science, South Kensington, was held at the Imperial College Union on October 9. Dr. H. Dingle, assistant professor of astrophysics at the College, occupied the chair, and among the assembly, in addition to many old students and colleagues and the Rector of the College, Mr. H. T. Tizard, were representatives of a number of scientific societies, including Sir James Jeans, president, and Prof. W. W. Watts, president-elect, of the British Association; Prof. F. J. M. Stratton, president of the Royal Astronomical Society, Prof. H. H. Plaskett, Savilian professor of astronomy, Oxford, and Prof. Allan Ferguson, secretary of the Physical Society. In an eloquent speech proposing the toast of the guest of the evening, Dr. Dingle gave an outline of Prof.

Fowler's career from the time when he entered the College as a scholarship student at the early age of fourteen and a half years to his appointment as Yarrow research professor of the Royal Society in 1923 from which he is now retiring. During almost the whole of this period, Prof. Fowler has been engaged in experimental research in spectroscopy, and his laboratory has become the chief centre of such work in the world. He is a leading authority on the identification and reproduction of celestial spectra, and his intuition and knowledge revealed in spark spectra series of lines which have fundamental significance in connexion with modern theories of the atom. In supporting the toast, Sir Richard Gregory said that metaphorically Prof. Fowler had for fifty years been listening to celestial language and music and had been successful in reproducing many of the fundamental notes, as well as analysing the over-