Obituary Notices

Prof. A. Wiedemann

ALFRED WIEDEMANN, professor of Egyptology at the University of Bonn, died suddenly at the end of 1936 in Bonn, at the biblical age of over eighty years. Both on his father's and his mother's side he belonged to academic families: his father, like his elder brother, Eilhard, was a well-known professor of physics and chemistry, and so was his mother's father, Mitscherlich. Wiedemann himself, although devoted from his youth to Egyptology, felt always a keen interest in natural history and anthropology, and was one of the first among his Egyptological fellow-students to become enthusiastic over de Morgan's theories on Neolithic Egypt. To the latter's book on the tomb of Naqada he contributed an exhaustive study on the methods of burial in the Naqada necropolis, and the origin of the Egyptian people: it was characteristic of Wiedemann to attempt to draw historical conclusions by interpreting Egyptian religious texts and Egyptian rites in the light of recently established archaeological facts.

Wiedemann devoted much labour to the study of Egyptian religion, and he will perhaps be best known to the British public through his contribution to the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, of which he was a member, and through his "Egyptian Religion", an entirely revised translation of a German book by himself. Maspero, on reviewing the German edition, regretted the lack of an elaborate bibliography imposed on Wiedemann by the editor. He alludes evidently to the notes in Wiedemann's "Egyptian History" and in his Commentary to the second book of Herodotus, where an almost incredible mass of information is put together from public and private museums, from publications and accounts of all times and countries, in which the student could find quoted nearly every opinion on any subject treated, every bit of an inscription, every scarab detected anywhere by the author, registered. This tremendous work has rendered great service, but unfortunately Wiedemann declined to make any distinction between important and less important material, and the reader found himself to a certain extent drowned by the flood of monuments big and small, and sometimes difficult of access. Wiedemann was more a sceptic than a critical spirit, and he was neither a philologist nor a historian in the narrower sense of the words. Some of his translations are excellent: his remarks on the age of Memphis against Erman's theory that the city was not founded until the Sixth dynasty, and his opposition to the attribution of the tomb at Naqada to Menes, were sound, but in both cases he missed the real point: the Naqada tomb certainly dates from the beginning of the First Dynasty, and Memphis, although existing before as a settlement, took its name from the pyramid of King Phiops.

Wiedemann disliked the sometimes too systematic way in which Erman, his pupil Sethe, and Eduard Meyer treated the language and history of Egypt. He was unjust to the undoubted achievements of these scholars, and finally resigned from collaboration in Egyptological work, being aware of the gulf which divided his methods from those of nearly all Egyptological scholars in the twentieth century. He devoted himself entirely to the study of the history of Godesberg, the native village (and now town) of his wife, his best companion in life and work.

Wiedemann was the pupil of Lepsius, Ebers and Maspero, and he was strongly influenced by the last. But he lacked the facility with which Maspero connected any new facts with his own knowledge, and he was more of a collector of sometimes very important material than a systematic worker. Maspero rightly once said of his work, that it had allowed many others to do original work, meaning that without the many references in Wiedemann's books and the many texts published by him (sometimes in small autographic pamphlets, which have become very rare), other scholars would never have been able to produce their own dissertations. This is true, and no living Egyptologist ought to forget what he owes to Wiedemann, even if many of his books and pamphlets are out of date. What is perhaps more, Wiedemann was always ready to allow anybody to make use of his library, his small but interesting collection of antiquities, and of his valuable copies, which sometimes contained passages destroyed since Wiedemann had copied them, perhaps so early as 1882-83. I have seen W. Max Müller spending weeks in Bonn in order to take notes from Wiedemann's archives.

A man so sociable as Wiedemann would naturally be a good teacher, he would put everything he knew and had at the disposal of his pupils, he would also open his house to his students, not only giving many of his lectures at home but also inviting his students on his regular Tuesday evenings, and, together with his wife, looking after them whenever they needed help. All who knew Wiedemann in his best years, before the War took his son from him and the inflation annihilated his fortune, will think with pleasure and gratitude of him and his home.

F. W. FREIH. V. BISSING.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Mr. R. J. Mitchell, C.B.E., chief engineer and designer of the Supermarine Aviation Works, on June 11, aged forty-two years.

Mr. J. L. Stocks, vice-chancellor of the University of Liverpool, formerly professor of philosophy and public administration in the University of Manchester, on June 13, aged fifty-four years.