

OBITUARIES

Dr. A. C. D. Crommelin

WE deeply regret to record the death of Dr. A. C. D. Crommelin which occurred on September 20. Andrew Claude de la Cherois Crommelin was born at Cushenden, Co. Antrim, on February 6, 1865, being the third son of Mr. Nicholas de la Cherois Crommelin, a member of the Huguenot family of that name. Educated at Marlborough College, he afterwards went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated as twenty-seventh wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos of 1886.

After leaving Cambridge, Crommelin became for a time an assistant master at Lancing College; but his interests lay in astronomy, and it was fortunate for him that in 1891 the appointment of an additional assistant at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, was sanctioned. Crommelin proved to be the successful candidate and he joined the staff on May 11, 1891. He was given charge of the altazimuth telescope and of the reduction of the observations of the moon which were made with it. He also undertook the reduction of observations of occultations of stars by the moon and of visual observations of the positions of comets made with the Sheepshanks equatorial. This work he continued to do throughout his career at Greenwich, though the programme of work with the altazimuth telescope became more extensive when, a few years after his appointment, the older instrument of Airy was replaced by a larger and more elaborate one.

The character of his work prompted Crommelin to take up the computation of orbits and ephemerides, and his name soon became known as the computer of the orbits of newly discovered comets and minor planets and of ephemerides for them. But his most important contribution to astronomy was the work he did, in collaboration with Cowell, in investigating the motion of Halley's comet and predicting its position on its return in 1910. Their prediction of the date of perihelion passage differed but three days from that actually observed. This research gained for its authors the Lindemann prize offered by the Astronomische Gesellschaft, and the University of Oxford conferred on them the honorary degree of D.Sc.

Crommelin contributed a number of papers of a similar nature to the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, and for more than forty years wrote the annual notes on minor planets and comets, a piece of work demanding much care and research on his part. For some years he computed and published ephemerides for the physical observation of Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and the moon, until this work was undertaken by the "Nautical Almanac". In his private capacity he went on several eclipse expeditions, and in 1919 he was chosen to go on the official expedition to Brazil when the results obtained verified the predicted deflection of light by the sun's gravitational field. For very many years he was a

valued contributor to NATURE of notes and articles on astronomical subjects.

Crommelin was elected a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1888. He served as one of its secretaries from 1917 until 1923 and was president during 1929-31. He was president of the British Astronomical Association in 1904-6 and was for many years director of the Comet Section.

Crommelin retired from the Royal Observatory in May 1927, after thirty-six years service, but he continued to be actively interested in the work of his choice. He married, in 1897, Letitia, daughter of the Rev. Robert Noble. Mrs. Crommelin died in 1921, and he lost his elder son and younger daughter in tragic circumstances. He is survived by one son and one daughter.

Commander F. Wild, C.B.E.

COMMANDER FRANK WILD, whose death took place on August 21, was born at Skelton, in Yorkshire, in 1873. His father was clerk of the Eversholt Parochial Charity at Woburn (Beds.) and on his mother's side he claimed descent from the celebrated antarctic pioneer, Captain Cook. He entered the Merchant Service in 1889, receiving his early training in sail in the famous clipper ship *Sobraon*. He entered the Royal Navy in 1900, and was serving as an A.B. in the *Vernon* when he was appointed to the National Antarctic Expedition (1901-4) under Scott. On this expedition, while still serving as a naval rating, he earned the praise and admiration of Scott himself for his coolness and resource under danger and for his qualities of leadership. But even more important for his future career was the attachment which grew up then between him and Shackleton, an attachment which developed into a lifelong friendship.

Wild's subsequent polar career is well known. He returned to the Antarctic with Shackleton in the *Nimrod* in 1907 "in charge of provisions", and took part, along with Shackleton, Adams and Marshall, in that magnificent journey which all but reached the Pole. Almost immediately afterwards he joined the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911-14 under Dr. Douglas Mawson, during which he commanded the Western Base on Queen Mary Land. At the conclusion of this expedition, after a brief interval ashore, he sailed again with Shackleton on the eve of the War of 1914-18 in the ill-fated *Endurance*. After the loss of that vessel in the Weddell Sea, he remained in charge of the expedition on Elephant Island, and there through four and a half months of extreme privation he pulled through to health and safety twenty-one semi-starved and ill-clad men.

After the tragic death of Shackleton at South Georgia in 1922, Wild commanded the Shackleton-Rowett Antarctic Expedition of 1921-22 in the *Quest*. Although the vessel failed to reach her main objective,

the Enderby-Coats Land coast, useful work was accomplished, covering a wide scientific field, notably on the islands of South Georgia, Elephant, Gough, Tristan da Cunha and others.

During the War of 1914-18, Wild led a commercial expedition to Spitsbergen and served in the R.N.V.R. with the rank of Commander. He went to South Africa in 1922 and engaged in farming. The venture failed, and, like so many others who have served a great cause with selfless devotion, he fell upon hard times. He was granted a Civil List pension shortly before his death.

Wild was a little man of slight build. Most indeed would have called him frail until they felt the power of his hands or saw him trimming coal in the intense heat of a ship's bunker in the tropics, or swinging back on a topsail halyard. He had bright, piercing blue eyes which twinkled at you when he spoke. They twinkled most—with sheer pleasure—during the headlong rush and excitement of shortening sail in heavy weather, or when, as he often did, he held the steer-oar of a small boat while negotiating a dangerous landing on a lee shore.

Wild was essentially a seaman of high quality, and a leader of men. His scientific achievement can therefore only be fairly judged by the work of those specialists—the surveyors, geologists, meteorologists, zoologists and others—who were placed in his charge and were encouraged by his example. It is perhaps not generally realized, however, that it was Wild who discovered the coal seams in the great Beacon

Sandstone formation high up on the Beardmore Glacier in 85° S. His detailed description of these coal measures is incorporated in the publications of the late Sir T. W. Edgeworth David.

As leader of Mawson's Western Party he was responsible for a notable contribution to antarctic exploration and research when he opened up Queen Mary Land by sledge under conditions which have seldom, if ever, been equalled for severity in the history of polar research.

If there was work to do, however hard or unpleasant the task, Wild never spared himself. His devotion to the cause which he served, his unquenchable spirit under severe trial, his cool head in emergency, his complete selflessness and, above all, his ever ready and kindly advice made him loved and respected by all who served with him throughout his long polar career.

JAMES W. S. MARR.

We regret to announce the following deaths :

Prof. Sigmund Freud, For. Mem. R.S., formerly professor of neurology in the University of Vienna, on September 23, aged eighty-three years.

Dr. J. A. Loeser, author of "Die psychologische Autonomie des organischen Handelns", in which novel views on animal behaviour were put forward, on September 12, aged forty-one years.

Dr. G. M. Murray, emeritus professor of medicine in the Victoria University of Manchester, known for his work on diseases of the thyroid gland, on September 21.

NEWS AND VIEWS

The British Association in War Time

SINCE the Dundee meeting of the British Association was brought to an untimely end, the office at Burlington House, London, has been re-opened for the routine work which always follows upon the annual meeting, and a certain amount of official business is also being carried on at Down House, where the rooms normally open to the public are closed and dismantled, and Charles Darwin's former dining-room serves the valuable if regrettable purpose of an office-refuge. The first number of the new quarterly report, *The Advancement of Science*, will be produced, all being well, probably rather later than the announced date at the end of October, and in smaller bulk than was contemplated. As to its future, and, for that matter, the future of the Association's work generally, obviously nothing definite can be stated. Preparations for the intended meeting next year in Newcastle-upon-Tyne have been suspended, by agreement with the authorities there. It is an unhappy coincidence that the last meeting in that city was the last to be held during the last war, in 1916. Conditions are so far different now that it is impossible to estimate whether any sort of meeting could or should be held next year, whether in Newcastle or anywhere else. Yet it is permissible to dream of the possibility of adapting the Association's

very flexible constitution to a meeting of four days or so, with science in war time as the leading theme, with sessions in three or four telescoped sections—physical, biological, anthropological, and economic, for example—and of course the Division for the Social and Economic Relations of Science. No doubt before anything of this sort could be undertaken there would be need of careful and wide inquiry as to the amount of support which might be forthcoming for such an effort. But if this were favourable, such a meeting could be arranged at relatively short notice. "The minor humours of war" may be offered in advance as one subject on the anthropological side.

The Fourth Partition of Poland

DURING the twenty years of its existence as an independent republic, Poland, like Czechoslovakia, fostered science and learning in a manner which gained the admiration of the whole civilized world. Its President, Prof. Ignacy Mościcki, was a distinguished chemist, and many other men of science took leading roles in the country's affairs and were able to ensure that education, science and culture were not neglected. There were thus very flourishing universities at Warsaw, Cracow, Lwów, Poznań, Vilno and Lublin. Almost every important town had its polytechnic high-school and there were