

particular aspects of Naval warfare. The reference to conditions of service including pay and prospects of promotion is vague, but it must be accepted at present as an earnest of the good intentions of the Admiralty.

The Admiralty and Government policy towards research in post-war years aims at giving research and research workers—in the broadest sense—recognition and status which they have hitherto lacked in Great Britain. It is also hoped that the R.N.S.S. will be accounted an honourable career for men whose leanings are towards science and the sea; that prospects offered by the R.N.S.S. will attract men of the highest calibre to devote their minds and their lives to solving the great problems which lie ahead of the Navy; that, though the Government service cannot generally offer monetary rewards comparable with those of the highest walks of industry, yet the other advantages of a Naval technical career will offset the possible financial disadvantage; that the Admiralty will be enabled to keep after the War some of the brilliant men who are serving it temporarily now; that there will be greater freedom for individual research workers to follow up lines of investigation for which they are personally fitted, and that the Government will not be so much inclined to look for quick returns.

OBITUARIES

Sir Arthur Smith Woodward, F.R.S.

SIR ARTHUR SMITH WOODWARD, lately keeper of the Department of Geology, British Museum (Natural History), died on September 2 at the age of eighty.

Sir Arthur was a great student of vertebrate palaeontology, the widest in his work and knowledge of his time. When he left Owens College, Manchester, as a very young man to take a post in the Museum, he recognized that the work of R. H. Traquair on palaeozoic fish had introduced a new standard of investigation and a new outlook, and immediately applied them to the study of later fishes. He travelled extensively so that he saw nearly all the original materials in the world, and his extraordinary memory enabled him to recall immediately anything which could throw light on the fossils on which he was actually working. Thus his catalogue of the fossil fishes in the British Museum marks an epoch in the study of such things. It was the first completely general detailed work since Agassiz's "Poissons Fossiles" and it has had no successor, so that it remains the point of departure from which all subsequent work has proceeded. To him came collections of fossil fish from every part of the world, to be in turn described, placed in their position in the classification, and their geological horizon determined. Thus he became known to palaeontologists everywhere, and was ultimately a foreign member of some twenty scientific societies.

But Sir Arthur's interests extended far beyond fish. He wrote on fossil Amphibia, reptiles, birds and mammals, doing something of interest in each of those groups, and finally he described the Piltown man, actually himself finding part of the material at Piltown.

His quality was well illustrated by the text-book of vertebrate palaeontology which he published in 1900. This differed in every way from those which

then existed; it was accurate, it dealt only with forms which were important morphologically, it was based entirely on materials which the author had seen, and it was readable.

When Sir Arthur entered the Museum the collections of fossil vertebrates, though large, had not been brought together on any considered plan. Under his influence and guidance they were expanded so that every important fauna in the world was represented, often by most admirable materials. But all were bought, sometimes after they had been sought for many years. Although Smith Woodward himself made a collection of fossil mammals at Pikermi, and Andrews explored the Fayum, no expedition was ever sent out at Museum expense; in consequence, during the past thirty years many foreign museums have exploited fossil faunas which are now inadequately or not at all represented in London.

But Smith Woodward always felt that he was a public servant. Everyone, British or foreign, had access to all the fossils in his charge, and was allowed to describe anything he wished. Thus the Museum gained because its collections were worked over by men from many countries, and palaeontology gained because specialists could use its materials, as if they belonged to their own institutions.

So Smith Woodward became known and admired by the whole body of palaeontologists, occupying a place no one can now fill, and leaving behind a great mass of admirable work, part of the foundation of modern palaeontology. D. M. S. WATSON.

Prof. S. P. Mercer, O.B.E.

THROUGH the death of Prof. Stephen Pascal Mercer which occurred on August 18 at the comparatively early age of fifty-three, Northern Ireland has lost an outstanding figure in the field of agricultural education and one who played a prominent part in laying a sound foundation for the Faculty of Agriculture of Queen's University, Belfast.

S. P. Mercer (S.P.M., as he was known to so many of us) was a Staffordshire man—the son of Mr. Fred Mercer, the landscape painter—and was born at Abbots Bromley in 1891. His leaning towards the study of agricultural science became apparent at an early age and is confirmed by his career as a student at Harper Adams, the Botanisches Staatsinstitut, Hamburg, and the South-Eastern Agricultural College. He was a graduate in agriculture of the University of London, and held the National Diploma in Agriculture. Before coming to Northern Ireland, Prof. Mercer held appointments as lecturer in charge of the Department of Agricultural Botany at Armstrong College, adviser in agricultural botany for the northern counties of England, and divisional organizer for the Northern Province under the Food Production Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. During 1919–22 he was assistant director and chief research officer in the Seed Testing Station for England and Wales. It was while holding this appointment that he made his survey of seed growing in Great Britain, which is the best known of his earlier work.

On his appointment, in 1922, as head of the Seed Testing and Plant Disease Division of the Ministry of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, he threw himself energetically into the organization of the Northern Ireland Seed Testing Station, where his long experience