Dr. J. D. Falconer

DR. JOHN DOWNIE FALCONER, geologist and geographer, died at Hounslow on April 16. The news of his death came as a shock to his friends, since he was present, and in apparent good health, at the annual meeting of the Geological Society just a month before.

Falconer was born in Midlothian in 1876 and was educated at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. During 1901-4 he was assistant to Prof. James Geikie, and he then went to Northern Nigeria as principal of the Imperial Institute Mineral Survey, returning to the University of Glasgow to take up the appointment of lecturer in geography in 1911. He went back to Northern Nigeria in 1916 as an assistant district officer, but in 1918 he was made director of Geological Survey for Nigeria, a post he held until 1927. During 1928-34 he was geologist to the Republic of Uruguay.

Dr. Falconer was the author of many papers and official bulletins, and of works in lighter vein on his travels in Nigeria and Uruguay. In 1937 he published a book on Darwin in Uruguay. The work for which he is best known and will long be remembered with appreciation is that relating to the physiography, geology and mineral resources of Nigeria, the results of which are in part incorporated in his "Geology and Geography of Northern Nigeria". This book and the accompanying map remain a valuable source of information, and the theoretical discussions, while not always in accord with modern views, have served as a great stimulus to further investigation. His work was characterized by thoroughness and wide knowledge of his subject, and it stands as a tradition and an inspiration to the Geological Survey of Nigeria, of which he was the first director. He was responsible for the earlier issues of the bulletins of the Geological Survey of Nigeria and the accompanying geological maps, which were of considerable scientific and economic value, especially as regards the tin resources of Nigeria.

The Geological Society awarded Dr. Falconer the Lyell Fund in 1920, and he served on the Council of the Society during the period 1927-29.

His loss is deeply felt by many friends and former colleagues, and by the mining community of Nigeria.

F. DIXEY

Prof. Fritz Weigert

THE death of Prof. Fritz Weigert on April 13 was a loss to science, and came as a sad blow to a wide circle of friends and colleagues who admired him as much for his personal charm and wide culture as they respected him for his academic achievements.

Fritz Weigert was born in Berlin in 1876, where he received his education as a chemist. While his early collaboration with such men as van't Hoff and Nernst in Berlin and Robert Luther in Leipzig no doubt had a profound influence on his life-work, the originality and highly individual character of his subsequent researches in photochemistry and related fields must be attributed to his own peculiar gifts, both in the brilliant improvisations of technique and in his imaginative approach in the interpretation of results and formulation of new theories.

In 1914 he was appointed professor of photochemistry at Leipzig, in succession to Luther, and in his inaugural lecture he put forward the courageous, if unorthodox, suggestion that in a new field of

research (as the study of photochemical reactions then was), rigid systems of interpretation, even if afterwards proved to be wrong, are justified on the grounds that new experimental methods may thereby be disclosed and new angles of approach discovered, which would be a stimulus for further research. In Weigert's hands, this double-edged weapon undoubtedly bore rich rewards in his researches, though it may also have been in part responsible for the tardiness in acknowledging all the credit due to him.

After thirty years of research in physical chemistry in Germany, Fritz Weigert had, with the advent of Nazism, to seek refuge in a foreign land; and so began his second career, at the age of sixty, as director of the Physico-chemical Department of the Cancer Research Institute, Mount Vernon Hospital, at Northwood, Middlesex. It is hard to say whether the choice of cancer research was entirely dictated by circumstances, or whether it was not partly influenced by his heritage, for he was the nephew of two of the most distinguished pathologists of the last century—Paul Ehrlich and C. Weigert.

The study of the metabolism of the carcinogenic hydrocarbon, 3:4-benzpyrene, by the application of fluorescence spectrography, which Weigert undertook in his new position, was ideally suited for a man of his ability, and he threw himself into the problem with the energy and enthusiasm that a man half his age might have envied. His contributions to this field were significant and stimulating, and characteristic of the man, both in the sphere of technique (as in his adaptation of fluorescence spectrography for the study of hydrocarbons adsorbed on alumina columns) and in the realm of interpretation of results.

Fritz Weigert was, to the end, a keen and active worker, and, despite his deafness, a witty and lively conversationalist. His death was unexpectedly sudden, as he himself would no doubt have wished it to be.

I. BERENBLUM
H. VON HALBAN

Alice Lady Avebury

THE death of Alice Lady Avebury at High Elms, Downe, Kent, on March 11, at the age of eighty-five, removed an important link between the two leading prehistorians of the Victorian period. She was the daughter of General Pitt-Rivers and the wife of the first Lord Avebury. From her father she inherited much—his clear intellect, his orderly ways and his imperious manner. She was Lord Avebury's second wife, being married to him in 1884 while he was still Sir John Lubbock, member of Parliament, banker, author of "Prehistoric Times" and the father of Bank Holidays. The Lubbock home, at High Elms, was a centre where the celebrated men of science of the Victorian period came to spend week-ends. Lady Avebury was an ideal hostess, and around her many new friendships were formed. She was a woman of wit and of beauty, never afraid to give utterance to what she really thought and believed. She was on the most friendly terms with the Darwin family at Down House, and when Darwin's home passed into the custody of the British Association she continued her association with that remarkable place. She welcomed the transfer of the historic Lubbock home of High Elms with its park and woods to London's Green Belt; indeed, she took the initiative in this transfer. Her daughter, the Hon. Mrs. Ursula Grant Duff, continues the Avebury interest in social science.

ARTHUR KEITH