OBITUARIES

Dr. R. H. Rastall

ROBERT HERON RASTALL, who died on February 3 at the age of seventy-eight, was the son of H. A. H. Rastall, of Turnerdale Hall, near Whitby. In early life he was destined for a career in agricultural science, and after taking the diploma of the Royal Agricultural Society held a post on the staff of the Tamworth Agricultural College. In 1899 he went up to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he gained a first class in both parts of the Natural Sciences Tripos, specializing in geology in Part 2, and in 1903 was awarded the Harkness Scholarship for geology. During 1906-13 he was a fellow of Christ's College and in 1926 was re-elected a supernumerary fellow. In 1910 he became University demonstrator in geology and in 1919 was appointed lecturer in economic geology. He was an active member of both the Geological and Mineralogical Societies and served on the councils of both these bodies.

Dr. Rastall's scientific interests were mainly in petrology and structural geology, and between 1903 and 1914 he worked in the Lake District and in South Africa, publishing important papers on the Ennerdale granophyre, the metamorphism of the rocks around the Skiddaw granite and the Worcester District in the Cape Province; meanwhile he was engaged in the study of sedimentary petrology and the geological structure of south-eastern England. In 1911, in collaboration with Philip Lake, he published his "Text-Book of Geology" and later several other books: "Agricultural Geology", "The Geology of the Metalliferous Deposits", and "Physico-Chemical Geology". During the First World War he held a post in the War Office and, becoming impressed with the importance of economic geology, he began to

apply petrological ideas to the theory of ore deposits, writing several papers and the book referred to above. In 1916 he began to assist Henry Woodward in editing the *Geological Magazine* and, in 1919, became editor, contributing many papers to its pages. In 1934 Dr. Bulman became joint editor, and this partnership lasted until his death. Meanwhile, he had been geological editor of the 1929 edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica", to which he contributed a number of articles. About the beginning of the Second World War he retired from Cambridge to his old home at Ruswarp near Whitby and, in collaboration with Dr. J. E. Hemingway, continued to work on the Jurassic rocks. A number of papers were published, and he remained actively interested in this work until his death.

Though of a somewhat retiring disposition, Rastall was an inspiring teacher. He was known to generations of undergraduates for his help in the Sedgwick Museum; but it was in the more intimate relation of a supervisor that he will best be remembered by many. He had the gift of drawing out and developing his pupils' ideas; a quiet talk with him could always be relied upon to produce some new and interesting point of view, and he has left a lasting mark on the Cambridge school of geology.

W. H. WILCOCKSON

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

M. Denis Brocq-Rousseau, *correspondant* for the Section of Rural Economy of the Paris Academy of Sciences, at Paris on January 22, aged eighty.

Prof. S. E. Whitnall, formerly Robert Reford professor of anatomy in McGill University and later professor of anatomy in the University of Bristol, on February 19, aged seventy-three.

NEWS and VIEWS

Directorship of the British Museum (Natural History): Mr. N. B. Kinnear, C.B.

NORMAN BOYD KINNEAR, who retires from the post of director of the British Museum (Natural History) on April 30, will then have completed forty-five years of service to museums in Great Britain and India. Before he joined the staff of the British Museum in 1920, he had been twelve years curator of the Bombay Natural History Society's museum (1907-19), and for two years previous to that a voluntary assistant at the Royal Scottish Museum in his native city of Edinburgh. His work as an ornithologist is well known (see *Nature*, 160, 252; 1947). He worked in the Bird Room of the British Museum for twenty-five years, first as an assistant keeper and, from 1927, as deputy keeper. He was appointed keeper of zoology in 1945, and in 1947, although then at the normal retiring age, he was appointed director for a period of two years in succession to the late Sir Clive Forster-Cooper. At this time repairs to the war-damaged parts of the buildings at South Kensington were well advanced and re-decoration of some of the galleries was in progress; in 1948 almost every month saw some new section of the Museum opened to the public. Kinnear secured additions to the special exhibition staff set up by Forster-Cooper and encouraged a high standard in new exhibits in every department. Improved

facilities for museum lectures were provided, and a Children's Centre and Junior Naturalists' Club were started and were very successful.

The most difficult problem Mr. Kinnear had to face in 1947 was that of finding room for the great collections which had to be removed from war-damaged galleries and stored in other parts of the building. In his brief term of office, Mr. Kinnear has gone a long way towards solving this major problem. It is owing to his efforts that there is now hope of the provision in the near future of sufficient accommodation to enable the collections to be rehoused and to make them more available for scientific research than they have been since the type specimens were sent out of London in 1939. Mr. Kinnear has taken an active interest in the work of all departments and in the welfare of his staff. Outside the Museum he has served on many committees concerned with the work of museums, with the promotion of Nature reserves and of field studies. He is a vice-president of the Zoological Society and chairman of the British Section of the International Committee for Bird Preservation.

Prof. G. R. de Beer, F.R.S.

THE announcement that Prof. Gavin R. de Beer, professor of embryology at University College, University of London, has been appointed director to succeed Mr. Kinnear has given widespread satisfaction