

Obituary Notices

Mr. T. W. F. Gann

WE regret to record the death of Mr. Thomas William Francis Gann, archaeologist and explorer of Central America, which took place in London on February 24, in his seventy-first year. He was the son of William Gann of Whitstable, and was born at Murrisk Abbey, Co. Mayo, the home of his mother, who before her marriage was Miss Rose Garvey.

Gann was educated at King's School, Canterbury, and at Middlesex Hospital, where he qualified as M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. in 1890. Later he went to Central America with a medical expedition to relieve distress after an earthquake in Guatemala, and from that time forward his life was devoted to Central American studies. He entered the Government service of British Honduras at Belize, becoming in due course principal medical officer of the colony and a member of the Legislative Council.

Although Gann was keenly interested in the study of tropical medicine, he was even more deeply devoted to study of the archaeology of the Mayan civilization of Central America. Taking advantage of the numerous journeys to various parts of the colony, which it was necessary for him to make, he explored the country for previously unrecorded ruins, at the same time observing the character and customs of the natives, which he appreciated might serve to throw light on the peoples of the ancient civilization. It was not long before he was recognized as an authority on Central American archaeology. He contributed papers to the British Association and the publications of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, and later was appointed lecturer on Central American archaeology in the University of Liverpool. In 1926 he represented the British Government at the International Congress of Americanists in Rome.

After the Great War, Gann's work, already recognized by specialists, became more widely known through the travel books of a semi-popular character which appeared annually over a number of years. In each of these he described a journey of archaeological exploration which he had made in the preceding year, and on nearly every occasion he had some outstanding discovery of previously unknown ruins to record. Of these, one of the most remarkable was the city of Coba, with its wonderful stone causeway of approach, extending for many miles. He also discovered some important date-inscribed stelæ, one of which was deciphered as giving the earliest date in Mayan chronology then known. As Captain T. A. Joyce has pointed out, it was owing to his interest in following up rumours of ruined cities in the depths of the tropical forest that attention was directed to the remarkable series of stone buildings which link the temples of Yucatan to the ancient Mayan centres of Guatemala and Honduras. Gann also shared in the work of the British Museum's expedition, of which Captain Joyce was in charge, when the great ruins of Lubaantum, Pusilhà and

Minanhà were excavated and explored. An explorer rather than an excavating archaeologist, owing mainly to lack of opportunity, Gann was conspicuously generous in placing his knowledge at the services of others whose opportunities were more favourable. His collections enrich both the British Museum and the Liverpool Museum.

In addition to the series of volumes recording his journeys of exploration, and papers in the journals of learned societies, Gann was the author of a number of works dealing with Central American archaeology and prehistory, of which the latest was "Mexico from the Earliest Times to the Conquest" (1936). With J. Eric Thompson he also wrote "A History of the Maya" (1931).

Dr. Francis G. Pease

THE Mount Wilson Observatory has suffered a severe loss by the death on February 7, at the age of fifty-seven years, of Dr. Francis G. Pease.

For many years Dr. Pease was in charge of instrument design at the Observatory. When the United States declared war in 1917, he became chief draughtsman to the National Research Council, Washington. He gave a great deal of thought to the design of very large telescopes, and his investigations showed that the construction of a 200-in. telescope presented no insuperable difficulties: he has been closely associated with the design of this telescope, which is to be erected on Mount Palomar.

Dr. Pease did a great deal of nebular photography, and many of his beautiful photographs of nebulae are celebrated. He determined the line-of-sight velocities of a number of the extra-galactic nebulae and investigated the rotation of some of them. In association with Dr. W. S. Adams, the spectra of various novæ were obtained after the novæ had become faint, and the novæ were shown to have become Wolf-Rayet stars.

Dr. Pease collaborated with Prof. Michelson in the application of the interferometer to the measurement of stellar diameters. With a special interferometer, 20 ft. in length, mounted on the end of the tube of the 100-inch telescope, he succeeded in measuring the angular diameter of Betelgeuse on the night of December 13, 1920, a memorable observation because it was the first measurement of the diameter of a star ever made. The measures of stellar diameters with this interferometer, and afterwards with a specially constructed 50-ft. interferometer telescope, have mostly been made by Dr. Pease. They demanded considerable skill in adjustment and great patience, qualities which Dr. Pease possessed in a unique degree.

When Prof. Michelson repeated the famous Michelson-Morley experiment with a large steel and invar interferometer in the years 1927-29, Dr. Pease collaborated in the observations. The purpose was to investigate the possible ether-drift which D. C. Miller claimed to have established. No displacement