OBITUARY NOTICE.

J. G. F. DRUCE.

1894—1950.

GERALD DRUCE died in a London hospital on 22nd June at the age of 55, after six months of painful illness borne with characteristic fortitude and cheerfulness. He worked almost to the end for his main interests—chemistry and international friendship.

Druce was born at Leamington Spa in 1894, and was educated at Kendrick School, at University College, Reading, and at University College, London, where he took his M.Sc. in 1921. Here, too, he met Heyrovský, and their friendship kindled the deep and warm interest in Czechoslovakia and its people that was one of the outstanding features of Druce's life. He first visited Czechoslovakia in 1920, and thereafter returned for a long stay at least once each year. In 1923 he was awarded the degree of Doctoris Rerum Naturalium by the Charles University, Prague, a distinction held by but few Englishmen, and as the years passed he was on terms of close personal friendship with President Masaryk and with many other distinguished men in the Government and in industry.

For the greater part of his professional life, Druce was chemistry and botany master at Battersea Grammar School, and was latterly head of the Chemistry Department there. He is thus one of the small, select band of schoolmasters who have left their mark on the science of chemistry. It was in a temporary laboratory in the grounds of the old school at St. John's Hill, Clapham, that Druce began his search for the missing elements Nos. 43, 75, and 93, and first isolated potassium per-rhenate from pyrolusite. His paper with F. H. Loring announcing this discovery appeared in 1925 almost simultaneously with Noddack's publication of the isolation of rhenium from molybdenite, and it is clear that Druce is entitled to the honour of the independent discovery of this element. Subsequently he contributed to the elucidation of the general chemistry of rhenium and in 1948 published a monograph on this element. His great and continuing interest in the subject is shown in one of his last writings, a letter to *Nature*, jointly with Dr. Newton Friend, discussing the possibility that " davyum," announced by the Russian chemist Kern in 1877 as a minor constituent in platinum residues, may in fact have been rhenium.

Druce's enthusiastic interest in chemistry and his skill and resource as an experimenter were an inspiration to his pupils. His influence was the more potent because he was not only a good chemist but also a man of broad culture and wide interests. He spoke many European languages fluently, including Czech and the Slavonic languages, and being a man of high integrity and intelligence with a delightfully modest and friendly disposition he won firm friends wherever he went, and without abating one whit of his stout patriotism became a powerful influence in promoting international friendship and understanding.

Druce became a Fellow of the Society in 1915, and joined the Royal Institute of Chemistry in 1919, becoming a Fellow in 1925. In 1937 he was awarded the Order of the White Lion for his cultural and scientific work, and he had the distinction of being an honorary foreign member of the Masaryk Academy of Work and a corresponding member of the Royal Bohemian Scientific Society. In 1943 he was awarded the degree of M.A., London, for a thesis dealing with the place of scientific men in the Czech national revival movement.

Such men of science and letters are all too few, and Druce's many friends here and abroad mourn his untimely passing and sympathise keenly with his widow and his son, Gerald, who had accompanied him on many of his travels and shared actively in his mission of international goodwill.

H. V. A. BRISCOE.