being otherwise busied at the time, I was unable to investigate the matter. Its bearing, however, on the magnitude of the effect in this instance of what is an established natural phenomenon is obvious and for that reason considerable.

The cliff took fire early in 1908. Notices, descriptions, and explanations appeared in various papers, local and otherwise, and enterprising shopkeepers in Lyme took photos and exhibited them as picture postcards, which they sold as mementos of 'the volcano'. The advertisement attracted visitors to Lyme, and evidently the burning cliff was a source of profit to the Lyme folk. In Charmouth, during April, 1908, it was common talk that when the 'volcanic' activity appeared to be subsiding, disappointed Lyme people poured paraffin on the cliff and relighted it. It is probable that, saturated with enough paraffin, any clay cliff would burn when lighted, and the effect would be commensurate with the amount of oil used. If paraffin was poured on the burning part of Black Ven, it has made it impossible to judge the extent of the natural combustion and of its effects. Last April a beautiful specimen of burnt red shale was in the Coach and Horses Hotel at Charmouth, but the interest it would naturally have evoked was spoiled by the suspicion that it was the result not of the heated behaviour of Black Ven, but of the commercial ardour of Lyme speculators. It would be interesting if a future Lyme visitor would investigate the report and establish the truth. In August last the Charmouth world said that the Lyme people had over-reached themselves, and had made so much of the 'volcano' that intending visitors stayed away through fear. This sounds so unlikely that one is inclined to doubt the truth of the paraffin statement.

With apologies for much gossip, even though it contains a warning,

PASSER VENNENSIS.

OBITUARY.

JOSEPH LOMAS, F.G.S.

BORN NOVEMBER 18, 1860. DIED DECEMBER 17, 1908.

MR. JOSEPH LOMAS, whose sad and premature death we recorded last month, was born at Bugsworth, on the borders of the Derbyshire Peak district, on November 18, 1860. He received his scientific education at the Royal College of Science under Professors Huxley, Judd, and others. In 1885 he was appointed to organize and conduct the teaching of science in the elementary public schools of Liverpool under the School Board, and he was professionally occupied with that work until the end. During his later years he was also a successful "Special Lecturer" in Geology in the University of Liverpool, which still has no professor of this important branch of science.

Though equally well trained as a zoologist and as a geologist, Lomas was inclined chiefly towards researches of a geological nature. His most important early work related to questions of Glacial Geology, which he attempted to solve by visits to Switzerland and the Faröe

Islands. He also wrote petrological papers. He joined the Liverpool Marine Biology Committee, and reported on the deposits found on the bed of the Irish Sea, comparing these with older geological formations. During later years, under the auspices of the British Association, most of his leisure was devoted to the study of the British Trias and a comparison of it with modern deserts. In 1905 he visited some of the desert regions in South Africa and Egypt, and when he met his death by accident in December last he was extending his researches to the region round Biskra in Algeria.

For many years Lomas was a well-known leader of field excursions, and he organized the excursion of the Geologists' Association to the Berwyn district of Wales last summer. He was also an active member of the British Association, and had been for several years Recorder of Section C (Geology). His personal charm and good nature and his enthusiastic cheerful manner endeared him to a large circle of friends, who mourn his unexpectedly early loss. The Geological Society of London acknowledged his scientific worth by the award to him of part of the Lyell Fund in 1897; while the Geological Society of Liverpool honoured him by election for two terms to its Presidential chair.

Mr. Lomas was a frequent writer on geological subjects. His separately published papers amount to seventy-two in number, thirty-one being read before the Liverpool Geological Society, twenty-four before the British Association, nine in the GEOLOGICAL MAGAZINE, and the rest read before various local scientific societies, that on existing Deserts compared with the British Trias (see GEOL. MAG., 1907, pp. 511 and 554) being one of the most important.

J. S. GRANT WILSON.

BORN JUNE 2, 1855. DIED DECEMBER 29, 1908.

WE regret to record the death of Mr. J. S. Grant Wilson on December 29 after thirty-two years' service on the Scottish Staff of the Geological Survey. After completing his education at St. Andrews University, where he carried out a series of analyses of minerals in the chemical laboratory under the supervision of the late Professor Heddle, he joined the Geological Survey in 1876. He received his first instruction in field mapping under Dr. B. N. Peach and Dr. Logan Jack when they were engaged in surveying the Silurian, Old Red Sandstone, and Carboniferous Rocks of the border territory in Eskdale and Liddesdale.

During his official career it fell to his lot to map large areas of crystalline schists in Banffshire, the north-east of Aberdeenshire, Central Perthshire, the fascinating region on either side of Ben Nevis, and part of the Knapdale plateau in Argyllshire.

While prosecuting his operations in the field in Perthshire he made a careful series of soundings in Lochs Tay, Earn, and Tummel, the results of which were published in *The Scottish Geographical Magazine* for May, 1888. His results agree very closely with those obtained subsequently by the Scottish Lake Survey.