

Society and honorary professor of philosophy in the University of London.

Nevertheless, all did not go smoothly; for the youth who set out on the philosophical quest in high hopes found himself as a man brought up against the blank wall of Humean scepticism. At a memorable dinner which Carr gave in 1911 in honour of Henri Bergson, he pictured in moving terms the sadness of his intellectual plight and hailed the French philosopher with gratitude as his rescuer. Students who have followed Wildon Carr's work during the last twenty years will, indeed, recognise how powerful an impulse he received from Bergson—an impulse which, reinforced by the later influences of Croce and Gentile, carried him forward to his own monadistic idealism.

Wildon Carr's development as a philosopher is dealt with below by another hand. It is, however, fitting to emphasise here what he did for philosophy and philosophers, apart from his output as a writer. For many years he was the honorary secretary of the Aristotelian Society, and from the death of Shadworth Hodgson onwards to the time when the state of his own health compelled him to seek sunnier skies, he might almost be said to have been himself the Society. This does not mean that he ruled it as an autocrat, seeking to make its voice his own. On the contrary, there was never a more generous appraiser of an opponent's merits, nor a scholar who sought more earnestly to let all sides of a question have the best exposition and the fairest hearing. Nor did an older philosopher ever keep a more watchful eye upon promising beginners or give them more encouragement.

Under Carr's kindly and inspiring rule the Aristotelian Society was for many years a forum where most of the notable thinkers of the day debated most of the living philosophical issues. His associates during those fruitful years knew how dear the welfare of the Society was to him, and how generously he spent upon it both his time and his material means. The solid work done by it under his guidance will be an enduring part of the monument he has left behind him; while so long as those who knew him and worked with him still live, the memory of his singularly gracious and generous personality must continue to "smell sweet and blossom".

T. PERCY NUNN.

IN speaking of Carr's philosophy, it is particularly difficult to separate the philosopher from the man. Like his first teacher, Shadworth Hodgson, he, if any man of my time did, lived the philosophic life, and, after his success in business enabled him to retire, he devoted himself entirely to cultivating philosophy in himself and others. Yet he remained rather a centre of philosophers than of philosophy, and his work was an influence rather than an achievement. He taught us, through his own devotion and through the affection he inspired, to feel that we were fellow-workers in one subject, however different in our methods of approach; and I scarcely like to think what we shall do without him. Nor was it only philosophers he

brought together; he also brought science and philosophy into their wholesome and natural contact. He believed that philosophy and science belonged together, and that philosophy could not be indifferent to changes in scientific ideas such as his time had witnessed. In this he was surely right. The work of the Aristotelian Society in the last twenty years is a standing witness to his success in this effort and to its fruitfulness.

Carr owed both his strength and his weakness to his open-mindedness; and the personal hold he had over philosophers of such differing views was only the other side of his candour and his intense effort to understand and assimilate. His own originality and independence showed itself in the tenacity with which he worked out a doctrine for himself, while making use of what he was continually learning from them. You would call him markedly suggestible, and impulsive as well, so that, as each successive thinker like Bergson or Croce or Einstein or Gentile fascinated him, he devoted himself to expounding them with enthusiasm. When I knew him first, he was still a disciple of Hodgson. Afterwards he leaned towards a Humean idealism, and the idealism which began thus early he never ceased to entertain under some form or other. In the end he worked his way to a kind of Leibnizianism which was very much his own. But, as anyone may see from his latest constructive pronouncement, "Cogitans Cogitata", it retained plain traces of the doctrines that had influenced his mind, and it would be an interesting and profitable task to follow him from his phase of discipleship up to that of mastery.

Carr's readiness to accept from others may have disturbed some persons; for my part, I admired rather the independence with which he converted them to his own uses, and always, even without assenting to him, I found him one of the most interesting and stimulating minds among my contemporaries. I still have the feeling that in dealing with relativity he was over-hasty in his deliverances. I subscribe to Bertrand Russell's statement that relativity is of immense importance to philosophy but that we do not yet quite know in what way. Carr had no doubt. He thought it had dethroned Newtonianism to make way for Leibnizianism; and I expect he was, in general, right. There was, however, a want of special authority about what he said when he was expounding the new science as science, and I understand his exciting some impatience among those who knew. But he showed philosophers the way, and that it was our duty to find material for our philosophy in a thorough understanding of this new mode of scientific thought. It would be an evil day for metaphysics if a great change should occur in men's minds about the science of things and we philosophers should go our way as if nothing particular had occurred.

In philosophy there has been a marked tendency in recent years to revert to Leibniz and monadism, but to treat the monads not as windowless, like Leibniz's, but as communicating. Carr would have nothing of it, and insisted that the monads were

completely independent of each other, each "expressing" itself (the word is his own) through its own activity in its own world of what is commonly called reality or external reality. The true reals are thus the monads, the so-called world of knowledge is ideal. The crux of any such theory is its solipsism, but he avowed and defended that attitude. He evaded the objection to solipsism by making community with other individuals part of the essential nature of each individual. I do not myself see how if the universe is each man's expression, it can still contain individuals who, like himself, are independent centres of activity. Often, however, as I pressed this point upon him, he did not seem to feel that it presented a real difficulty, and he seemed to think he had met it by reference to speech and mutual intercourse. In the same way he seemed to me to make the special interpretations by individuals of the physical world too exclusive of each other, and to forget that the very pith of the doctrine of relativity is that physical laws are the same in form for every observer. Leibniz himself had God and the pre-established harmony to save his monadism: but for Carr, God was but a part of the world of each monad; and this, to my mind at least, presents difficulties.

Carr's explicit philosophy is chiefly contained in the work I have mentioned and the earlier "A Theory of Monads". But besides these and his expository books, there were others, which show what a wealth of knowledge he had, outside strict philosophy or only partially related to it; in particular, two books which he published during his Californian period, "Changing Backgrounds in Religion and Ethics" and "The Unique Status of Man". When I happened once to speak to him enthusiastically of Pascal's "Pensées", with which I had made acquaintance quite late in my

life, I found that the book had been his constant companion for many years.

His assiduity and industry were immense, and if his friends knew well the sweetness of his character, the amount of work he accomplished is a witness to the strength and persistence of it. To my mind, Carr's work has been for the philosophy of our time a refreshment, and even, with all allowance for its shortcomings, a fecundation; and I must not forget the singular beauty and simplicity of his style of writing, which reflected his own directness and candour of mind.

S. ALEXANDER.

#### MR. ERNEST NOEL.

MR. ERNEST NOEL, who died at his home, Dulaney House, Patching, Sussex, on May 20 at the age of ninety-nine years, was the doyen of the Geological Society of London. Elected into the Geological Society in 1849—P. Martin Duncan, who afterwards became a fellow of the Royal Society, was also among the chosen in that year—he had been eighty-two years on its roll, a span probably without parallel in the annals of English scientific bodies. At the date of Noel's election (he was then living at Hornsey), Sir Charles Lyell occupied the presidential chair, and Charles Darwin was a member of council. Such circumstances had provided many interesting reminiscences of contemporaries and original workers in geological and general science. Born on Aug. 18, 1831, Mr. Noel was the second son of the Rev. the Hon. Baptist Noel, who himself was the tenth son of Sir Gerard Noel, and brother of the first Earl of Gainsborough (second creation). Mr. Noel was educated at Edinburgh and Trinity College, Cambridge. T. E. J.

### News and Views.

THE summary by Sir James Jeans of a series of lectures on the annihilation of matter, delivered by him during his recent visit to the United States, which we publish as our supplement this week, is a characteristically skilful presentation of the case for the reality of this process, of which he has for some time been convinced. Although, as he indicates, the doctrine of the permanence of matter has been a leading feature of the greater part of the history of science—it dates at the latest from the time of Aristotle—supporters of the opposite idea have never been wanting. It appears to be peculiar to our own time, however, that they are to be found among followers of the 'experimental philosophy'. Yet, fantastic as the idea would have seemed to the physicists of a few generations ago, it is impossible, after considering the evidence which Sir James Jeans so ably summarises, to dismiss it as unworthy of scientific attention. The process is mathematically possible; it is certainly not fundamentally inconsistent with modern atomic theory; it provides a plausible explanation of a physical

observation—the highly penetrating radiation; and it appears to be the only means of bringing order into the perplexing mass of data concerning the constitution and history of the stars. The cumulative effect of these facts, even if they are not strictly additive, is considerable, and it is not surprising that the hypothesis of annihilation is being treated with marked respect.

GENERAL acceptance of the idea, however, is out of the question until more facts of observation are available. Sir James remarks that "the majority of astronomers think it probable . . . while many, and perhaps most, physicists look on the possibility with caution and even distrust". It is perhaps for that reason that he has devoted the greater part of his discussion to the physical evidence. While his diagnosis of the situation is, perhaps, not very inaccurate, it is scarcely a fundamental one. The reaction of the man of science—whether he be physicist or astronomer—to the idea will depend on his mental constitution. The passage from mathematical possibility to physical