

OBITUARIES

Sir Franklin Sibly, K.B.E.

THE life of the late Sir Franklin Sibly was notable as the triumph of a brilliant mind over physical frailty. After an almost precocious career as a student (he obtained the degree of D.Sc. at the age of twenty-five), he became a teacher and worker in geology. He seemed set for the life of an active academic geologist, and the work he accomplished in the ten years of this phase placed him in the front rank. But in 1920 his appointment as principal of University College, Swansea, brought out his latent genius for administration, and during the last twenty-six years of his active life he became successively vice-chancellor of the University of Wales, principal of the University of London and vice-chancellor of the University of Reading. Such responsibilities might well have filled a normal life, especially since their holder was by no means physically robust; but from 1929 until 1946 he held, often concurrently, a series of administrative positions to which he brought qualities of sagacity and geniality beyond the ordinary.

There is no room in this brief account for even a bare enumeration of Sir Franklin's manifold activities; but a few aspects of his achievements may be selected to show something of his qualities. His published geological work is concerned chiefly with the Carboniferous rocks of the Mendip and Forest of Dean districts. After nearly thirty years, his papers still stand as fundamental clarifications of these complex areas—they are by way of becoming classics.

As first principal of University College, Swansea, he achieved a vast amount of constructive administrative work that gave a firm foundation for future developments. As second vice-chancellor of the University of Reading he had further opportunities for building tradition. It was in the last-named office that he spent the longest single period of his life (1929-46), and his colleagues rejoice to realize that the wisdom and friendliness that they found in him were reciprocated in his happiness among them.

In the wider academic sphere, Sir Franklin was chairman of the Executive Committee of the Universities Bureau of the British Empire from 1929 until 1934. Later (1938-43) he held a similar position in the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and during the difficult war years exercised a guiding influence on the policy of all British universities.

As a member of the Advisory Council of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (for a cumulative period of ten years) he was largely instrumental in devising the conditions of award of the Department's scholarships—now widely recognized as a model for all such schemes. For thirteen years he happily combined both phases of his genius as chairman of the Geological Survey Board.

The honorary degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by the Universities of Bristol, Wales and Liverpool. He was knighted in 1938 and received the K.B.E. in 1943.

In spite of his notable services to British science and also his administrative skill, the abiding memory for those who knew him is one of friendship. His good humour and understanding sympathy were never lacking, even when failing health might have excused their lapse. He improved on the recommendation to be all things to all men by being

consistently himself to all; everyone who worked with him or for him knew him for a friend.

H. L. HAWKINS

Mr. G. S. W. Marlow

GEORGE STANLEY WITHERS MARLOW, whose death occurred on March 5, was born in 1889, and educated at New College Choir School, Oxford, and King's College, University of London. He graduated B.Sc. in 1909, and the next year obtained his associateship of the Institute of Chemistry, taking as his special subject, food and drugs. The F.I.C. (now F.R.I.C.) followed in 1913. For a couple of years after graduating, he was assistant to Mr. E. Hinks, public analyst for the County of Surrey. In 1911, he joined the staff of the Government Chemist, where he remained until 1919, when he became assistant secretary of the Institute of Chemistry. After six years there, he left to become personal assistant to Mr. W. J. U. Woolcock, general manager of the Association of British Chemical Manufacturers. Meanwhile, in 1923, he had been called to the Bar, and decided to practise in 1927. He was a member of Gray's Inn, and pupil to the late Mr. W. Trevor Watson, K.C. He acted in such cases of chemical patents as arose, his first being the application of Boots Cash Chemists, Ltd., to revoke Sharp and Dohme in the matter of hexyl resorcinol.

In 1926, however, an event happened in Marlow's life which was to transform its pattern to a considerable extent and provide him with a task after his own heart. This was the suggestion by the Council of the Faraday Society that he should succeed the late Mr. F. S. Spiers as general secretary, and take over the management of its affairs, including the editorship of the *Transactions*. Marlow accepted, and in so doing initiated a tenure of some twenty-two years, during which the Society has advanced from strength to strength, largely due to his unflagging efforts, wisdom and guidance. Marlow lived for the Faraday Society, and his devotion to it knew no bounds.

The General Discussions, which have always been the Society's major activity, were a feature before Marlow took charge; but he managed to give them further weight and authority, at the same time enhancing their hospitable and social character. For more than a couple of decades, he always had at least one Discussion ahead, before he was clear of the one behind, and lived, scheming and planning, to make each one an individual success. He would journey to universities all over the country in search of appropriate places at which to meet, and no vice-chancellor or principal was safe from his clutches in his efforts to obtain accommodation and comfortable surroundings for the participants. On these occasions, the guest-night dinners were distinguished, the secretary radiating good-fellowship throughout the evening. During one of these General Discussions, Prof. P. Debye wished to give an impromptu demonstration of the properties of a dipole. Marlow, as to the manner born, quietly handed him a cigar for the purpose. Foreign guests were his special concern; nobody was permitted to worry for a moment on account of lost luggage, money, passports, or even relations. The secretary produced them all, safe and sound, with that engaging smile of his, as if nothing had happened.

So the years went on; the *Transactions* increased in bulk, and—during the War—no less an anxiety