

## OBITUARIES

## Prof. C. G. Douglas, C.M.G., F.R.S.

It is a habit of Oxford men to accept without due acknowledgment the help which they have received from two sets of people, to wit, their tutors and their scouts. This obituary notice, in the compilation of which I have been greatly helped by one of his distinguished pupils, enables me at least to repay in some small measure my personal indebtedness to Prof. Douglas, whose thoroughness in his teaching and demonstrating contributed so much to my happiness in the years immediately following the First World War. He was born on February 26, 1882, the son of Claude Douglas, but he himself never married. He was educated at Wellington College and Wyggeston School, Leicester, and was elected to an Open Science Exhibition at New College in 1900, and to an Open Science Demyship at Magdalen College in the same year. In 1905 he was awarded the University Scholarship to Guy's Hospital, and in 1907 was elected Fellow of St. John's College. In 1921 there followed the Radcliffe Prize, which is open to all Oxford graduates proceeding to a medical degree. During the First World War he served as temporary Lieut.-Col., R.A.M.C., being mentioned four times in dispatches and being awarded the C.M.G. and the M.C. In 1927 he was Oliver-Sharpey lecturer at the Royal College of Physicians, and in 1945 he was awarded the Osler Memorial Medal.

Douglas was a very conscientious tutor who made his pupils read and work for themselves. He demanded a high standard, and seldom if ever expressed satisfaction with his pupils' efforts. The only occasions on which he did so were in the end of term collections, when he would inform the President of St. John's of his complete satisfaction with one's progress. He was personally very austere and a little aloof, but basically very friendly beneath that exterior.

He had a wide knowledge of the literature, but for various reasons fought shy of the central nervous system. The general metabolism school at Oxford enormously advanced knowledge of respiratory function and, what is important, did their work on human beings, namely, themselves. In the opinion of some, there have been no really significant advances in knowledge since then. Odd bits have been polished, nerve impulses recorded, new terms invented (which have confused the modern student not a little); but the principles they developed still stand, a tribute to the quality of their work.

Douglas's practical classes were excellent. The preparations for them all were made by his own hands; for years he had no technical help whatever. He must have had a great love of teaching to have spent laborious hours cleaning and preparing the blood and gas analysis apparatus for the frequent misuse by the undergraduates. Although his carefully prepared apparatus was frequently spoiled, he seldom lost his temper, though once he threw a particular student out of the class-room for spilling over the pyro a second time, but that was the only occasion of which my informant can think.

His pupils presented him with an excellent portrait, which now hangs in the Senior Common Room at St. John's College, Oxford.

Prof. Douglas died on March 23, aged eighty-one.

K. J. FRANKLIN

## Prof. S. H. Piper

PROF. STEPHEN HARVEY PIPER, professor emeritus in physics in the University of Bristol, died at his home in south London on March 5 at the age of seventy-five.

He was born in 1887, the son of Alfred Towry Piper, and was educated at King's College School and proceeded to King's College, London, where he gained a first-class honours degree in physics in 1910. After a year as a research scholar he was appointed lecturer in physics at University College, Nottingham, a post which he occupied until the outbreak of the First World War.

In 1914, Piper joined the Sherwood Foresters direct from University College, Nottingham, and he served with distinction throughout the War until its conclusion in 1918. He was wounded in the Gallipoli campaign, was three times mentioned in dispatches, and was awarded the D.S.O. After the War, Piper returned for a short time to Nottingham but in 1921 he was appointed as lecturer in physics in the University of Bristol and it was there, for thirty-two years, that he spent the remainder of his academic life, becoming reader in 1933 and professor of physics in 1951.

When he first arrived in Bristol, A. M. Tyndall had recently been appointed to the chair of physics, and he and Piper established a close friendship. This association was an important element in establishing an atmosphere in the Department which was to prove highly conducive to originality and enterprise as the laboratory grew rapidly in size. During his early years in Bristol, Piper commanded the Officers' Training Corps. When he left it in 1926 he had made it into an efficient body at full strength, a remarkable tribute to his personality and drive, for at that time the total student population was only about 600. His active interest in the undergraduate population continued throughout his career, and by his tact and understanding he made an invaluable contribution to the relations between the university authorities and the students.

Piper's part in the development of the physics laboratory was especially valuable after it was transferred in 1927 to its present site in the gardens of the Royal Fort. He was the principal support of Tyndall in a situation which was not always made easy by a growing body of eager and sensitive young men, sometimes a little temperamental, which the laboratory was beginning to attract.

They found in Piper a kind of safety-valve through which they could relieve their minds by blowing off steam, well knowing that he was a man who would never take advantage of a confidence. His gay and unsentimental temperament made him admirably fitted for this role, and there are many stories from this period of his quick and adroit wit, whereby without administering a personal affront he could prick the bubble of arrogance, turn tension into laughter, or administer a mild rebuke. On one occasion while demonstrating in a makeshift laboratory, part of which was curtained off to permit experiments on optics, there was heard the unmistakable sound of a kiss. Without hesitation he put his head round the curtain and said to an embarrassed young man: "I must emphasize to you, here and now, that I am the demonstrator in this laboratory". A second story from the early days of the present laboratory relates that, on a Saturday morning, Piper had been engaged in the very dirty job of cleaning a Leybold pump. This had taken him until well after one o'clock so that he was left alone in the building.