

ton. These officers are appointed for but one year at a time, and it is expected that most of the offices (chairmen of divisions, etc.) will be filled in rotation by men drawn from the scientific faculties of the universities, the staffs of large scientific institutes, and the research laboratories maintained by the industries.

Although during the war the Council was largely supported by the Government, it is now entirely supported by private funds. A gift of 5,000,000 dollars has recently been made to it by the Carnegie Corporation. Part of this money, perhaps a million dollars, will be used to erect a building in Washington for the offices, conference rooms, etc., of the Council and the National Academy of Sciences, and the remainder will constitute a permanent endowment for the Council. This endowment will provide for the administrative expenses of the organisation, leaving the funds necessary to aid in the support of the large co-operative scientific projects of research, which the Council hopes to stimulate or establish, to be found, as the needs require, from wealthy men or philanthropic foundations interested in the promotion of the investigation of the fundamentals of science and from the industries interested in promoting the extension of scientific applications.

The Council as at present organised includes thirteen divisions, seven representing the various major lines of science and technology, and six representing general relations. The first seven are divisions of the physical sciences, engineering, chemistry and chemical technology, geology and geography, the medical sciences, biology and agriculture, and anthropology and psychology. The general relations group includes a division of foreign relations, a Government division (including representatives of each of the major scientific bureaux included in the Government Departments of War, Navy, Commerce, Labour, Agriculture, State, and Treasury), a division of States relations, one of educational relations interested especially in the research conditions and activities in the colleges and universities of the country, a division of research extension especially devoted to the extension of research to the industries, and a research information service intended to act as a general national clearing-house for information concerning the scientific *personnel* and scattered research work of the country.

Affiliated with these various divisions are many special committees and sub-committees which concern themselves with various special phases and specific projects of scientific investigation. The present number of these committees approximates fifty. There is also a special Research Fellowship Board, which has at its disposal through the

period from May 1, 1919, to June 30, 1925, the sum of 500,000 dollars, appropriated by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Maintenance of National Research Fellowships in Physics and Chemistry. Thirteen of these fellowships have so far been instituted.

The National Research Council is thus neither a great operating scientific laboratory nor an organisation possessing large funds from which to make direct gifts to individual scientific investigators or scientific laboratories, but an institution for the purposes of stimulating and organising scientific research in America, and of promoting international scientific relations in all possible ways. It is specially interested in organising scientific effort along co-ordinated co-operative lines. It hopes to encourage vigorous attack on major problems too large and many-sided for the individual investigator working alone, and often requiring the co-operation of numerous investigators and laboratories representing several different but allied lines of science. In the applications of science it is especially interested in such problems as bear directly on the promotion of the national strength and well-being.

Among the many projects now in course of organisation or actual development are an extensive study of food and nutrition in charge of a committee including many of the leading American physiological chemists and experts in human and animal nutrition; a study of high explosives, begun during the war; the preparation of critical compendia of physical and chemical constants; a study of the fundamental scientific problems of baking, of ceramics, of steel alloys, of synthetic drugs, of the chemistry of colloids, of sewage disposal, of forestry, of fertilisers, etc. An extensive investigation of tropical biology, including especially tropical medicine, is in course of organisation. A detailed survey of the research conditions in all the colleges and universities of the country, in which research work is now being done or probably can be done in the near future, is in active progress. A committee on mental measurements has recently completed an elaborate series of trials of group tests on several thousand children, and has prepared, and is about to publish, a set of recommended tests for use for classification and grading in the common schools of the country. These tests are adapted from the sets developed by the Council's special psychological committee on Army tests during the war. Altogether, the Council is getting under way a good deal of important research work, and promises to be an organisation of much influence in the promotion of American activity in the advancement of science.

### Obituary.

MARLBOROUGH R. PRYOR.

SOME fifty years ago Marlborough Robert Pryor, who died at Weston Park, Stevenage, on April 3, was well known in scientific circles at Cambridge, and seemed likely to rise to a high

position in those studies. He was a man of many interests and great adaptability of mind, who, though he was rather early diverted to executive business, never lost his interest in those parts of it which were connected with science. Educated

at Eton, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, taking his degree as B.A. in 1870, and that of M.A. three years later. It is rather remarkable that he did not "go in for honours," for he was then so conspicuous a student of natural science as to obtain successively a scholarship and a fellowship by examination in those subjects, being in each case the first elected to these distinctions in Trinity College.

In Pryor's days natural science was beginning to look up in Cambridge, though it did not yet lead directly to a degree, for its first Tripos examination, when the list was headed by Prof. Liveing, was in 1858, four men being in the first class, and two in the second. Until 1869 the total number in all the classes rarely exceeded ten, and sometimes sank down to four, and on three occasions no one was in the first class. Things have changed since then, for in the days immediately before the war there would be some 120 or more in the three classes, as there doubtless will be again. But from 1870, when Pryor's name would have appeared had he gone in for the examination, the names of men who have since won distinction are more often found in the lists—such as H. Darwin (now Sir Horace); W. M. Hicks, of Sidney, who turned from science to theology and became Bishop of Bloemfontein; Garrod and Lydekker, Teall, Martin, Frank Balfour, M. Hartog, and Sollas, now professor of geology at Oxford, not to mention others.

Pryor, however, so far as I know, wrote no papers of importance on strictly scientific matters. I do not find his name in the earlier volumes of *NATURE*, which began to appear in November, 1869, nor is it in my catalogue of collected papers on scientific matters, which goes back to a still earlier date. Yet he won distinction at Cambridge, not only by his academic successes at Trinity, but also from all who met him there in scientific society. One could not be long with him without getting the impression that one was talking with a clear-headed man of strong intellect, who looked at things all round before he spoke of them, and expressed his views quietly and deliberately. He had a large store of knowledge and was a keen critic, yet never anything but kindly. He took a special interest in ornithology, and was a frequent member of that circle of young men of science which the late Prof. Alfred Newton delighted to gather round him on Sunday evenings after dinner in his rooms at Magdalene, where much tobacco was consumed and any amount of natural history was talked. These gatherings indirectly extended the interest felt in that subject in Cambridge, and perhaps were an even greater incentive to its study than any formal teaching by the professor.

Soon after taking his degree Pryor left Cambridge and entered on a business career in London, settling down near Stevenage, where he inherited from an uncle an estate called Weston Park. At first he joined a firm of South American merchants, and became a director of some important joint-stock companies. The two with which he

was most closely and permanently connected—and they were businesses requiring especially a clear head and a sound judgment—were the Sun Insurance Office and the Sun Life Assurance Society, to each of which he became chairman, holding those offices until 1918. The prosperity of these institutions was the chief work of his later life, and he carefully studied the problems of insurance in all its branches. It is said that his views were strong and his business ideals high, and that nothing short of the strictest practice would ever satisfy him. But he was regarded with real affection by the other members of the boards, and to the younger of them his great store of knowledge on all sorts of subjects was a constant cause of wonder. Still, he kept up his connection with his college and his university, for he frequently came up to be present at special social gatherings in the former, and in later years took an active part in the endeavour to collect funds to advance teaching in the latter, which was gratefully acknowledged in a resolution passed the other day. Besides all this, he was a good Spanish scholar, and had paid much attention to church architecture, especially in Hertfordshire. He married Miss Alice Solly, of Serge Hill, in that county, and has left six daughters and one son, Col. Pryor, D.S.O., who served in France and Italy.

So, to the regret of many friends, Marlborough Pryor is gone. He has left no conspicuous record in the scientific annals of his generation, as once seemed probable, but no one can say that his life was wasted, because, while some men can serve science the better by taking a prominent lead in this or that branch of it, others can do it by the catholicity of their knowledge and interests. Marlborough Pryor was among the latter, and each has his work to do; each is helpful to his generation; for the one raises the towers; the other, as he did, builds the walls.

T. G. BONNEY.

MR. J. A. POTT, who died recently at the age of fifty-five, was a scholar whose importance as a moving force in his generation cannot be estimated by the popularity of his work during his lifetime. As an archæologist he contributed to the *Antiquary* for 1904 two articles on Neolithic and other remains found near Harlyn Bay, Cornwall. He made the first translation into English of two important treatises of Thomas à Kempis, entitled "The Founders of the New Devotion," and the "Chronicle of the Canons Regular of Mount St. Agnes." These were followed by two series of graceful renderings of poems from the Greek Anthology. Just before his premature death, due to overwork in recruiting during the war, he had completed a verse and prose translation of the Epigrams of Martial, which will shortly be published. A fine scholar and man of letters, Mr. Pott exercised an inspiring influence over a large group of friends drawn from circles largely differ-