

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-

ing both socially and intellectually. The charm of his personality depended on the fact that, happy as he was himself in living, he was still happier in making his life a blessing to others.

MR. A. H. HIORNS, who died on April 17, was for many years head of the metallurgical department of the Birmingham Municipal Technical School. He commenced teaching metallurgy about 1875 in branch evening classes under the auspices of the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Later he was transferred to the central school, and was so successful as a teacher that he was granted leave of absence in 1882 and 1883 to study at South Kensington under Sir W. Roberts-Austen. On his return to Birmingham he organised a new metallurgical department at the Birmingham and Midland Institute. As the work expanded, it was transferred to the Birmingham Municipal Technical School, where the enthusiasm and geniality of Mr. Hiorns gathered an ever-increasing number of students. Mr. Hiorns contributed papers on metallurgical subjects to various scientific societies, but was best known as the author of a number of students' text-books, which have had a wide circulation, and include "Practical Metallurgy and Assaying," "Metallography," "Metal Colouring," "Iron and Steel," "Mixed Metals," etc. He retired from teaching some eight years ago, and the latter part of his life was spent chiefly in rural pursuits.

T. T.

MR. T. W. BACKHOUSE, of West Hendon House Observatory, Sunderland, who died on March 13 in his seventy-eighth year, devoted a large part of his life to scientific pursuits, and carried on for more than sixty years a series of meteorological and astronomical observations. He was a frequent contributor to our correspondence columns, and a most successful student of those minute differences in the appearance of the sky or of the atmosphere that escape untrained observers, who prefer to consult the barometer rather than natural phenomena. Four volumes of Publications were issued by him from his observatory, and the last, in 1915, summed up the accumulated records, extending over fifty years, of his skill and vigilance as an observer. In 1912 Mr. Backhouse published a valuable new catalogue of 9842 stars, containing all stars conspicuous to the naked eye. The catalogue was designed specially to afford assistance in the observation of meteors, to which Mr. Backhouse himself gave much attention; but it has been found useful by many other astronomers. His last communication was on the subject of the January meteors (Quadrantids) of 1917 (*NATURE*, vol. c., p. 313). Mr. Backhouse became a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1873, and of the Royal Meteorological Society in 1892.

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Notes.

THE PRINCE OF WALES having graciously consented to be nominated as an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the nomination was made at the last ordinary meeting on May 3, and the election will be carried out, according to regulation, at the ordinary meeting to be held on June 7.

THE Croonian lecture of the Royal Society will be delivered by Prof. W. Bateson on June 17 upon the subject of "Genetic Segregation."

MR. J. H. LESTER has been elected chairman of the chemical section of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society for the session 1920-21.

NOTICE is given by the Chemical Society that applications for grants from the society's research fund must be made, on forms supplied, to the assistant secretary, Chemical Society, Burlington House, W.1, on or before June 1.

MR. WILFRED H. PARKER has been appointed director of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany. The institute, including the Official Seed-testing Station for England and Wales (the director of which is Mr. Saunders), will be housed at Cambridge in a large building which will be completed by next summer. Meanwhile the temporary office of the institute is at 72 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

THE Salters' Institute of Industrial Chemistry invites applications for fellowships of the annual value of 25*l.* from those who in October next will have completed three years' training in chemistry and desire ultimately to enter upon an industrial career. The applications, including particulars of the candidates' training and war service, must be sent to the director of the institute, Salters' Hall, St. Swithin's Lane, E.C.4, by, at latest, July 1.

A REPORT by Dr. A. Mearns Fraser, Medical Officer of Health for Portsmouth, upon the prevention of venereal diseases was noticed in *NATURE* of March 25 (p. 114). The Society for the Prevention of Venereal Disease now informs us that the Portsmouth Borough Council has decided that steps shall be taken to educate the male inhabitants of the borough in the facts put forward by Dr. Fraser as to methods of prevention by immediate self-disinfection.

SCIENTIFIC visitors to the Royal Academy's exhibition this year will be much interested in the fine presentation portrait of Sir Clifford Allbutt painted by Sir William Orpen. The picture hangs in the first gallery and bears the inscription: "Sir Clifford Allbutt, K.C.B., M.D., F.R.S., Regius Professor of Physic in the University of Cambridge; President of the British Medical Association. Presented to him by his Profession, 1920." A proof of the mezzotint engraving of the portrait is exhibited in the room devoted to engravings, drawings, and etchings.

THE Department of Scientific and Industrial Research announces that the third Conference of Research Organisations will be held to-morrow,