

an aerial, Dr. Fison fell through a skylight to the floor below. Three days later he died without regaining consciousness.

Dr. Fison's life-story is that of a teacher whose enjoyment in knowing was so vivid that no delight could equal that of passing his knowledge on. In his earlier life he had for twenty years lectured for the Oxford University Extension Delegacy; and this is a school in which the spirit of enthusiasm for knowledge is engendered. If an extension lecturer be not in complete sympathy with his audience, if he has not the instinct for detecting want of harmony between his mind and theirs, his lectures are a failure; his thought-waves must be of the length for which his auditors' receivers are tuned.

From 1912 until his death Dr. Fison was Secretary to the Gilchrist Trust. Each year in the spring he visited various parts of Britain to inspire enthusiasm and to organise local arrangements; in the autumn and winter to deliver lectures. His efforts to fill successfully the gaps caused by death in the Gilchrist staff discovered to him how very rare are the men who have the gift which he possessed of securing in their first few sentences the complete confidence of their audiences and retaining their strained attention for eighty or ninety minutes—halls crammed with people of all sorts and conditions, from the clergy, doctors, and schoolmasters of the town to miners and mill-hands—sending them away with the feeling that the evening which had closed a long day's work had altered their views of the world and had, at the same time, entertained them hugely.

In 1906 Dr. Fison was appointed lecturer in physics to Guy's Hospital, and somewhat later to the London Hospital also. Although his teaching work was elementary, he held that no teacher can be efficient who does not follow the most recent developments of his subject. He was a sound scholar—in the sense in which the expression is used by students of the humanities who are disposed to arrogate it to themselves. The very large gathering of students at the memorial service in the Chapel of Guy's was a measure of his success. Shortly before the accident brought his activities to a sudden close he talked to the writer of these notes of his plans for an early retirement and the devotion of his remaining days to investigations for which his duties as a teacher had left him but scanty leisure, and the publication of his reflections—his bent was ever towards philosophy—upon various aspects presented by the problems of physical science. His best-known contributions are "Recent Advances in Astronomy" (1898) and "A Textbook of Practical Physics" (1911, rewritten 1922).

#### MR. RAWDON LEVETT.

THE death at Colwyn Bay on February 1 of Mr. Rawdon Levett, at seventy-eight years of age, will be regretted by none more than by the members of the Mathematical Association, of which, under its old name of the Association for the Improvement of Geometrical Teaching, he was one of the original founders. From his pen, in *NATURE*, of December 29, 1870, p. 169, first came the suggestion that such an Association should be formed, and the first conference was held at University College,

London, on January 17, 1871. Levett possessed much more than the driving power and organising capacity which made him so successful a secretary in the first twelve years of the Association. Unlike most of his contemporaries he had familiarised himself with the continental text-books and with the methodology of his subject as taught in France, Germany, and Italy. The ideas of non-Euclidean geometry found in him an apt exponent to any who cared in those days to listen to him, and in the revolution that was to come in the fields of geometry and analysis he played for a time a prominent part. His "Elements of Trigonometry," which he brought out in collaboration with Dr. Davison in 1892, shows how much he had been influenced by De Morgan, by Cauchy and the continental school, and by Chrystal—and in that case the influence had been reciprocal.

The name of Canon J. M. Wilson has stood for half a century with that of Rawdon Levett on the list of officers or of vice-presidents of their Association. Both were at St. John's; Wilson was Senior in 1859; Levett was 11th Wrangler in 1865 (Rayleigh's year). Both were schoolmasters, Wilson in those days at Rugby, and Levett at King Edward's School, Birmingham. Both have retained their interest in the work of the Association, though ill-health had for many years past prevented Levett from taking any active part in its later history. The interests of neither were restricted to the sphere in which their academic honours were won.

Levett was a man of wide reading and general culture. By many his name was probably seen for the first time on the dedicatory page of "John Inglesant"—"I dedicate this volume to you that I may have an opportunity of calling myself your friend." The spiritual kinship that knit together men like Levett and Short-house indicates but one of the intellectual influences that brought to the Birmingham schoolmaster intimate relations with a wide circle of men who appreciated to the full his noble character, rare judgment, and fine literary instinct. Birmingham was the poorer by his loss when the shadow of the White Scourge fell upon him in 1903, and he retired to his Welsh home at Colwyn Bay. Now he is gone, and the only founders left are Canon Wilson, Mr. A. A. Bourne, Sir Thomas Muir, the Rev. E. F. M. MacCarthy (secretary for seven years), and the Rev. W. H. Laverty. W. J. G.

#### PROF. GASTON BONNIER.

WE regret to announce the recent death at Paris of Prof. Gaston Bonnier, professor of botany at the Sorbonne, member of the Institute (Académie des Sciences), of the Academy of Agriculture and the Council of the University of Paris, Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, foreign member of the Linnæan Society of London, and member of many other scientific bodies.

Prof. Bonnier was the president of the Société Botanique de France, and editor of the *Revue générale de Botanique*, founded by him in 1889. Among his numerous botanical publications that have become classic may be particularly mentioned his "Cours de botanique," "Géographie botanique et la botanique descriptive," "Flore complète de la France," "Nouvelle Flore des environs de Paris," and "Flore du nord