

MR. S. R. WILSON.

THE news of the accidental death, at the early age of forty-five years, of Sidney Rawson Wilson while carrying out an experiment with nitrous oxide has given a painful shock to his many scientific and medical friends.

Wilson was the son of Arthur Cobden Jordan Wilson, of Penistone. He had a brilliant career as a student at Manchester, during which he obtained the Junior and Senior Platt Physiological Exhibitions and the M.Sc. (Vict.) in physiology. Thus early he showed an interest in physiology which remained unabated throughout his life. He afterwards took the M.B. degree, both at London and at Manchester, in both cases with honours, and the F.R.C.S. Edin.

Professionally, Wilson was one of the first to make anaesthetics his speciality, and he always endeavoured to combine scientific investigation along with its practical applications. He developed the use of the combined administration of oxygen and nitrous oxide for prolonged anaesthesia and introduced improvements in the method of ether administration. The use of carbon dioxide as a respiratory stimulant, the importance of which has been emphasised by Yandell Henderson in America, was another of Wilson's contributions to practical anaesthetics. This year he published a paper on 'ether' convulsions, the first scientific contribution to the elucidation of this new and dangerous phenomenon.

Although previously noted in workers in paraffin refineries, Wilson collected evidence so early as 1906 of the occurrence of cancer of the scrotum in mule spinners. His work on this disease won the Tom Jones Surgical Scholarship in 1907. In 1922 he published a joint paper with Mr. A. M. Southam on this condition, and in 1926 the report of the Home Office Committee on mule spinners' cancer gave him credit for this pioneer work.

News and Views.

THE notice of Dr. Gustave Geley's book on "Clairvoyance and Materialisation," in NATURE of July 23, seems to have been understood by some readers as signifying acceptance of the demonstrable existence of what is known as 'ectoplasm.' Mr. Campbell Swinton expressed the general scientific attitude upon this subject in a letter to NATURE of Aug. 27, and the reviewer, "W. W. L.," then explained that what were described as "facts of experience" in the notice are not necessarily scientific facts capable of being repeated and demonstrated at will. Whether statements about psychical manifestations related by uncritical observers, or similar evidence of 'ectoplasmic' structures, are accepted as 'facts' at all, depends largely upon the tendency of the listener or reader to believe or to doubt. The distinction is aptly drawn by Cowper in his poem "Conversation" in the words:

"Can this be true?" an arch observer cries:
 "Yes" (rather moved), "I saw it with these eyes."
 "Sir! I believe it on that ground alone;
 I could not had I seen it with mine own."

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On the inauguration of a new course in human physiology in the Manchester School, Wilson gave, although in the midst of many professional demands, unstinted help in the development of this teaching and in the carrying out of both human and animal experiments. These led him to try out fearlessly their results on his own person. He had early this year inaugurated research on the problem of how far nitrous oxide possesses specific anaesthetic properties apart from its action as an oxygen diluent in producing anoxaemia. Indeed, it was this work that led him to undertake the experiments which resulted in the fatal accident and deprived the Manchester School of an untiring and intrepid worker.

Wilson took a deep interest in the special senses and in the physiological interpretation of hypnosis. Recently he had initiated work on the retinal sensitivity to the red end of the spectrum, in the course of which he discovered some remarkable phenomena and was engaged in their elucidation during the early part of this year. Recognition of his work by American colleagues gave him great pleasure, and he did much to open up co-operation between the workers in the two countries. Besides contributing to the medical journals he took a large part in the foundation of the *British Journal of Anaesthesia*. He leaves a widow, son, and daughter to mourn his loss. F. W. L.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Dr. Bruce Fink, since 1906 professor of botany in Miami University, an authority on lichens, on July 10, aged sixty-five years.

Sir William Glyn-Jones, from 1919 until 1926 secretary of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, on Sept. 9, aged fifty-eight years.

Prof. R. A. Lehfeldt, professor of economics in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, since 1917, and formerly professor of physics in East London College and also in the South African School of Mines and Technology, aged fifty-nine years.

ASSERTIONS as to the real nature and physical properties of 'ectoplasm' are received by most natural philosophers in the sceptical frame of mind expressed in these lines. So much attention has, however, been given to the subject in recent years that we invited Dr. Fournier d'Albe, who translated Schrenck-Notzing's "Phenomena of Materialisation" (see NATURE, Nov. 18, 1920; p. 367), to contribute an article upon the actual evidence for the existence of what has been alleged to be an incipient type of matter; and his contribution appears elsewhere in this issue. It will be seen from this article that Dr. d'Albe regards all the alleged phenomena of ectoplasm as spurious. This conclusion of a physicist who has devoted many years to psychical research and spiritualism must carry more weight in a court of natural science than that of many witnesses not possessing his experience in careful observation and cautious conclusion.

IN THE Bd. II. (1927) of the *Zeitschrift für kritischen Okkultismus*, Dr. d'Albe has supplemented