

Upon his retirement, Prof. Sexton became Minister of the New Church at Jersey, and afterwards held a similar appointment at Liverpool and Northampton. He gave up the latter post in 1923 and returned to Jersey.

#### PROF. W. W. KEEN

PROF. WILLIAM WILLIAMS KEEN, who died on June 7 at the age of ninety-five years, gained his reputation as a surgeon during the American Civil War, and for a period of more than fifty years thereafter was recognised as the most outstanding figure in American surgery. He was a contemporary of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and like him had uncommon gifts of personality and scholarship. His textbook on surgery enjoyed a world-wide reputation for many years, and made his name known far beyond the University of Pennsylvania, in which he taught, and the city of Philadelphia, in which he practised.

Dr. Keen was one of the first to adopt and apply to surgery the principles and practice of Listerism. He was a scientific surgeon in so far as it is yet possible for a surgeon to be guided by scientific principles, and although the author of innumerable contributions to surgical literature, all of which added something to the subject dealt with, yet it was his personality and general proficiency rather than his originality in any particular field which gave him the high place he enjoyed for so many years.

Dr. Keen recognised that surgery depended for its advance on the growth of the basal subjects of medical education, particularly of experimental physiology, and never wearied in his defence of vivisection and of temperance. Like the late Sir William Osler, he was a bond between the medical professions of the United States and of Great Britain.

WE regret to announce that Miss Adelaide Ames, research assistant in the Harvard Observatory, was drowned in a canoe accident in Squam Lake, New Hampshire, June 26, at the age of thirty-one years. Her scientific work, thus suddenly ended, had already gained for her a wide recognition. She was a member of the Commission on Clusters and Nebulae of the International Astronomical Union. For several years Miss Ames had carried on investigations in the field of extra-galactic nebulae, her principal publications dealing with the Coma-Virgo cloud of galaxies. Her most important work was in connexion with a photometric survey of all extra-galactic objects to the thirteenth magnitude—a census of the inner parts of the metagalaxy to a distance of five to ten million light-years. This survey was completed in June and will be published during the next month in collaboration with Dr. H. Shapley.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Dr. Geo. K. Burgess, director of the U.S. National Bureau of Standards, and treasurer since 1924 of the National Academy of Sciences, on July 2, aged fifty-eight years.

Prof. Matthew Hay, emeritus professor of forensic medicine in the University of Aberdeen, formerly medical officer of health for the city, on July 30, aged seventy-six years.

Prof. John R. F. Sebelien, formerly professor of chemistry in the Agricultural College, Aas, Norway, known for his contributions to the chemistry of milk and dairy feeding and artificial manures, aged seventy-four years.

Sir William Willcocks, K.C.M.G., the distinguished irrigation engineer whose name is associated with the Assuan dam and the Assiut barrage in Egypt and with irrigation work in Mesopotamia, on July 28, aged eighty years.

## News and Views

### Dr. P. A. M. Dirac

DR. P. A. M. DIRAC, of St. John's College, Cambridge, has been appointed to succeed Sir Joseph Larmor when he vacates the Lucasian chair of mathematics at Cambridge on Sept. 30 next. Dr. Dirac has been one of the most notable of the group of young physicists (mostly within a year or two the same age) who have, during the past seven years, created quantum mechanics. After graduating at the University of Bristol both in engineering and in mathematics, he entered the University of Cambridge as a research student in the Faculty of Mathematics, and may perhaps not unreasonably be accounted fortunate in his time, for he was in the middle of his course for a research degree when the ferment of dissatisfaction with the limitations of the older quantum theory was at its height, and the great blaze of theoretical advance was set alight by Heisenberg's first paper of the autumn of 1925. Dr. Dirac was one of the first to see clearly how the new ideas were to be extended and formalised, and his own researches have played a great part in both these processes, especially in formalisation.

His unpublished degree thesis was probably the first such attempt to present in any detail in a consistent and logical way the revolutionary new theory. Later he published a much expanded and revised form of this attempt in his well-known book on quantum mechanics. His most strikingly original and successful contribution to the whole theory is his relativistic theory of the electron, a contribution in which his great mastery of and instinct for form has guided him at once to the correct generalisation. Dr. Dirac will succeed to the Lucasian chair when he is just over thirty years of age, with the acclaimed consent and good wishes of all his colleagues in mathematical physics in Great Britain. His University may look forward to another long and distinguished tenure of a chair to which long and distinguished tenures are by no means unfamiliar.

### New Skull from South Africa

PROF. DUBOIS' comment on the skull recently discovered at Ngandong, Java, and its relationship to Rhodesian man, which appeared in NATURE for July 2,