

Sir George Buchanan, C.B.

THE death, on October 11, of Sir George Buchanan, a devoted public servant in public health, will be regretted by a wide circle of friends. George Seaton Buchanan was born on February 19, 1869. He was the eldest son of the late Sir George Buchanan, F.R.S., who was principal medical officer to the Local Government Board from 1880 until 1892. The younger Buchanan graduated at the University of London with the degrees M.B. (gold medallist), 1891; M.D., 1892; M.D. (State medicine), 1893; and B.Sc.; and became later a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. In 1895, at the age of twenty-six years, he was appointed to a post of medical inspector in his father's old Department, then under the leadership of Sir Richard Thorne-Thorne. After serving for nearly forty years in this Department and the Ministry of Health, which was created from it, he retired at the age limit of sixty-five years in 1934, but continued to hold the office of president of the Permanent Committee of the Office International d'Hygiène publique in Paris (which carries with it the vice-presidency of the Health Committee of the League of Nations in Geneva) to which he had been elected in 1932. His soul was devoted almost exclusively to the public service, and he thus, after leaving the British Government service, was able to continue public health work of international importance.

When first appointed to the Local Government Board and for many subsequent years, Sir George was occupied in making epidemiological inquiries into outbreaks of infectious disease in England and Wales. He became president of the Epidemiological Section of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1918 and 1919. His first published report in 1897 on an inquiry into enteric fever in some districts of East Anglia provided an early proof of the disease being due to polluted oysters. A few years later, his epidemiological inquiry into the manner in which smallpox spread during an epidemic in Essex supported the view (first brought to notice by Power in 1881 and again in 1884) that smallpox can be spread, from hospitals receiving acute cases of this disease, by distal atmospheric convection, apart from personal contact.

From 1901 until 1903, Sir George Buchanan acted as secretary to Lord Kelvin's Royal Commission on food contaminations, which led in 1905 to the organization by the Local Government Board of a new section with Buchanan at its head with the title of 'Chief Inspector of Foods'. In 1912 he became first assistant medical officer under Sir Arthur Newsholme, then chief medical officer of the Board. Two years later, by his appointment as official delegate for Great Britain on the Permanent Committee of the Office International d'Hygiène publique in Paris, he entered the field of international public health affairs, which thereafter formed his chief public health work. During the Great War, he served on special commissions which visited Gallipoli, Egypt, Salonica and Mesopotamia, and the honour C.B. (Military) was conferred upon him for these services. When peace came, his services on the Army Sanitary

Committee and the Inter-Allied Sanitary Commission in Paris were retained, and he continued to take an active part in international arrangements for preventing the spread of typhus, dysentery and other diseases which affected troops and refugees returning from the war areas.

His valuable services in solving various international health problems cannot be enumerated here, but special mention must be made of the large share Sir George took in designing and drafting the International Sanitary Maritime Convention which was agreed upon and signed at the International Sanitary Conference held in Paris in 1926. Later he took similar action in drawing up international rules for the prevention of transmission of yellow fever and other infectious diseases by aircraft. These rules were embodied in the "International Sanitary Convention for Aerial Navigation" which is now in force. The activities of the international health organizations in Paris and Geneva are given in full in the Milroy Lectures on "International Co-operation in Public Health, its Achievements and Prospects" delivered by Buchanan before the Royal College of Physicians of London on February 27 and March 1, 1934.

The honour of knighthood was conferred on Buchanan in 1922. He was appointed master of the Society of Apothecaries of London for 1934-35, and in the same year was awarded the Mary Kingsley Medal by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and the Jenner Medal by the Royal Society of Medicine in London for his work in the control and prevention of epidemic diseases.

DR. JAN BAŠTA, a distinguished Czechoslovak engineer and member of the Masaryk Academy of Work, died in Prague on October 13 aged seventy-six years. He was the first student to graduate from the Prague Technological University in 1902. Later he had a distinguished career as a railway engineer, but never lost his keen interest in pure science. His last publication, dealing with the relationship of force with matter, was referred to in NATURE of July 11 last p. (83).

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. H. R. Briton-Jones, professor of mycology in the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, on November 3.

Dr. Kurt W. Franke, chemist at the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, known for his work on enzyme action and nutrition, on September 15, aged forty-six years.

Mr. C. E. Haselfoot, fellow (formerly dean) of Hertford College, Oxford, lecturer in mathematics in Wadham College, from 1888 until 1913, on October 28, aged seventy-two years.

Prof. Henry Landes, professor of geology and dean of the College of Science, University of Washington, an authority on the mineralogy of Washington, on August 23, aged sixty-eight years.

Mr. A. E. Hodge, founder and editor of the *Aquarist and Pond-Keeper*, aged fifty-eight years.