

## OBITUARIES

## Dr. Cresswell Shearer, F.R.S.

DR. CRESSWELL SHEARER, who died at Cambridge on February 7, after a brief illness, will be remembered as one of the most interesting personalities in the ranks of British zoologists.

As a young man Shearer took a medical degree at McGill University, but his main scientific interests lay in the field of experimental embryology. He spent much time at Naples at a period when the Stazione Zoologica was perhaps at the zenith of its fame. There he met many of the great figures of late nineteenth century biology, and his recollections of this period were afterwards a constant source of delight and instruction to his own Cambridge pupils. In 1910 he settled in Cambridge, and shortly afterwards was appointed the first of a series of University lecturers in experimental zoology. The next decade was a period of active and productive research. They were also, however, years of unusual inspiration to students. His lectures were almost invariably unorthodox in presentation, if not in substance, but they gave a real insight into contemporary biological thought and threw into relief the lines along which future progress seemed likely to come.

Prior to the War of 1914-18, Shearer had published a number of important papers on the development of trochosphere larvæ and on sex determination in *Dinophilus*. In 1913 the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* contained the well-known monograph on "The Experimental Hybridisation of Echinoids", which was the result of Shearer's work in collaboration with W. de Morgan and H. Munro Fox. This work was carried out at Plymouth, where many of his pupils followed him in the summer months of each year. During the War, he returned to medicine and worked in the west of England. Here began many years of happy married life.

Shearer was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1916, and in 1918 returned to Cambridge to carry out a series of important researches on the effect of fertilization on the metabolism of the eggs of sea urchins. He showed, for the first time, that spectacular changes in oxygen consumption occur for a few seconds after the spermatozoon has entered the egg.

Shearer's versatility was perhaps one of the most characteristic features of his University career. He worked first in the Department of Zoology, then in those of Pathology, Physiology, and finally Anatomy, keeping in close contact with the younger research workers in all these and other laboratories. For several years he held the post of University lecturer in embryology in the Department of Anatomy. On his retirement from University work, he returned once more to the Zoological Department, much to the pleasure and advantage of the Department.

Apart from his biological interests, Shearer was a man of wide general learning. His knowledge of medieval Italian architecture was profound, and in 1935 he published "The Renaissance of Architecture

in Southern Italy". It is to be hoped that his later work will also be made available to those interested in this field of learning. His ability as an artist and his enthusiasm for photography were not only of great value to him in both his scientific and literary work, but also gave very considerable pleasure to his friends.

Shearer was a man of rather retiring disposition, but once the thin crust of his reserve was broken, he revealed a warm-hearted and most generous nature. His memory will not readily fade. J. GRAY.

## Dr. J. G. Priestley

By the death of John Gillies Priestley, which occurred on February 9 at the age of sixty-one, the School of Physiology at Oxford has suffered a loss which it can ill afford, especially at this critical time when university education is faced by endless difficulties arising from the War. He was, it is true, somewhat reticent by nature, but those who knew him best gained in his friendship something that they prized. A man of great personal charm, generous to those in need, he was always ready to interrupt his own work to give help and advice to any who sought it. With a balanced judgment on the work of others, he was hypercritical of himself and modestly diffident of his own powers. Meticulously accurate in his experimental methods, no trouble was too great for him to take in his research work, and in his teaching he always tried to inculcate into his pupils some of his own gift for accurate observation and attention to detail. With a quiet courage and determination that was characteristic he fought against ill-health that told more and more upon him as the years passed, publishing his final paper in December 1940, and resigning his readership only a few weeks before his death when he knew that he had no longer strength to fulfil the duties of his office.

Priestley was educated at Eton and gained an open scholarship at Christ Church in 1898. It was whilst reading physiology at Oxford that he became acquainted with John Haldane, whose friendship was to have a great influence on his future career. As soon as he had taken his degree in 1902, he joined Haldane in an investigation which resulted, in 1905, in the publication under their joint authorship of that remarkable paper on the "Regulation of the Lung Ventilation" which was to play so large a part in the development of physiological knowledge. Leaving Oxford he then went to St. Bartholomew's Hospital to complete his clinical studies. After gaining his medical qualification he became house physician to Sir Wilmot Herringham, whose high opinion he won. After working for a year with Falta in Vienna he returned to St. Bartholomew's to take charge of the new Laboratory of Chemical Pathology which had just been opened, but within two years he developed tuberculosis of the lungs and had to go