

Prof. F. G. Parsons

To many generations of men who received their medical training at St. Thomas's, the news of the passing of Frederick Gymer Parsons in his eightieth year must come with a sense of personal loss. For Parsons had a personality that could never be forgotten, and into every picture of the Medical School of St. Thomas's there must come, in the memories of hundreds of medical men, a kidney-shaped table and, standing in its concavity, a powerfully-built man with an enormous red moustache. The students sitting round the convexity of the table knew him as a teacher; but many knew him as more than that, for there was no form of student activity he did not foster, no work for student enterprises or welfare he ever found too arduous or ever left undone.

Of those who still cherish such happy memories of Parsons the majority are now in middle life, for his retirement from active teaching took place many years ago. But well past middle life are those who knew him at the height of his activities, when all his great energies were directed towards the subject that he made his own. When Parsons was laying the foundation stone of the work on comparative anatomy by which he must ever be known, London was, from an anatomical point of view, an 'island' of English anatomy entirely surrounded by Scotsmen. In the 'island' were, among others, C. B. Lockwood and G. D. Thane, G. B. Howes and Christopher Addison; and of that group Lord Addison is the only one who remains with us.

These men were making London an anatomical centre equalling in its reputation the traditional glory that clung to Edinburgh. All were what the younger generation of anatomists would now stigmatize as 'old-fashioned', for some were mainly concerned with the Hunterian tradition, some with human topographical anatomy and some, like Parsons, with comparative anatomy. It was mammalian myology to which Parsons devoted most of his energies for research, and this subject and the anatomy of mammalian joints he made his own. He dealt in facts—facts laid bare by his scalpel; and as a storehouse of facts his works are permanent.

It was considerably later that Parsons became especially interested in physical anthropology and made his valuable contributions to our knowledge of the osteology of the earlier inhabitants of England. In all his later work he found much interest in the historical setting of the Saxon Englishman. In this setting he saw even a personal intimacy, for he conceived himself to be representative of the typical Saxon, and probably he was near the truth in this. He loved the sea. He had spent happy years as ship's surgeon. True to the traditions of the sea he loved the countryside, and he had that age-long hankering of the sailor to settle down in retirement in a country inn with roses near the front door.

Parsons lost one great ideal when the tragic death of his wife nearly thirty years ago sundered a perfect partnership. Parsons was a man. He took this great blow like a man. His many friends must rejoice in this, that though he lost his great ideal, he did what many others have failed to do. An active life of devoted and useful work and of scientific attainment passed over into years of happy and contented retirement; and in the end and at the "Swan" in Thame he lived to see one of the dreams of his youth come true.

F. WOOD JONES.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. P. P. Bedson, emeritus professor of chemistry, Durham College of Science, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (now King's College, University of Durham), on April 4, aged ninety.

Sir Edwin Butler, C.M.G., C.I.E., F.R.S., formerly director of the Imperial Mycological Institute, Kew, and secretary to the Agricultural Research Council, on April 4, aged sixty-eight.

Dr. H. Forster Morley, formerly director of the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature and of the Royal Society's Catalogue of Scientific Papers, on April 3, aged eighty-seven.

Mr. R. A. Roberts, a Royal Commissioner for Historical MSS., and formerly senior assistant keeper in the Public Record Office, on April 2, aged ninety-one.

NEWS and VIEWS

Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins, O.M., F.R.S.

SIR FREDERICK GOWLAND HOPKINS' published contributions to biochemistry are well known; but as the time approaches of his relinquishing the Sir William Dunn chair of biochemistry at Cambridge, it is perhaps opportune to try to appraise his influence on the progress of the subject from 1899, when he took up work at Cambridge, to the present time. It has frequently been said in Great Britain during these years that "Hopkins *is* biochemistry"; when he decided to make this subject his own, biochemistry, as he visualized it, scarcely existed either in Great Britain or on the Continent. This is not to minimize the monumental achievements of such men as Emil Fischer and Albrecht Kossel, his immediate forbears; but while he fully appreciated the value and significance of this work, Sir Frederick visualized something beyond the isolation and description of the products and components of animal and vegetable tissue. He thought of biochemistry as a tracing out of the chemical events of the living cell, and a relating

of these events to function and ultimately to growth itself. All his papers bear the impress of this idea, and to-day it is the accepted meaning of biochemistry. This change-over from the static to the dynamic is largely his work. Not only in his papers, but even more in his lectures and in his discussions over the work of his pupils, this idea was ever uppermost, and if it were possible to measure his influence on the progress of science, his direction of the thought of his pupils and colleagues into these channels would surely be his greatest achievement.

Yet vigorously as Sir Frederick pursued his endeavours to describe the chemical occurrences of the living cell, his point of view was the reverse of vitalistic. Instead of regarding the biochemist as one occupied solely with isolating and analysing, leaving growth and function outside the scope of his investigation, Hopkins had a faith that the chemical changes accompanying and controlling living functions are discernible, and that to devise methods for such studies is the prime duty of the biochemist. It