

OBITUARIES

Sir Harold Scott, K.C.M.G.

SIR HAROLD SCOTT, who died at Braintree on August 6, shortly after his eighty-second birthday, was widely known as a pathologist, a historian of tropical medicine, and an editor. After taking medical qualifications in 1897, he served in the South African War, returned to England and entered general practice and then went to Jamaica as Government pathologist. The First World War brought him once more into the R.A.M.C., and after its conclusion he became Milner Research Fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where he elucidated the life-history of *Hymenolepis*. He was then appointed Government pathologist at Hong Kong, retaining this post for several years until compelled to retire through ill-health. Later he became pathologist to the Zoological Society of London, medical secretary of the Colonial Medical Research Committee, and in turn assistant director (1930) and director (1935) of the Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases, until his retirement in 1942.

As a pathologist he published a large number of papers and monographs on tropical subjects—particularly on the vomiting sickness of Jamaica, the central neuritis of Jamaica, and on tuberculosis in man and lower animals (based on his experience in Hong Kong and at the Zoo). He wrote several books, including "Some Notable Epidemics" (1934), but his most important literary work was his great "History of Tropical Medicine" (1939), which has been recognized throughout the world as a masterpiece. At the Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases he edited the *Tropical Diseases Bulletin* and the *Bulletin of Hygiene*, and it was under his direction that the *Bulletin of War Medicine* was created. He was appointed C.M.G. in 1935 and K.C.M.G. in 1941.

Scott was for many years associated with the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, of which, to his great pleasure, he was elected president in 1943.

One of his most outstanding characteristics was a capacity for hard, sustained and conscientious work. He was a man of high intelligence and quick decision, and he worked rapidly, leaving himself ample time for the voracious reading which was his chief relaxation. He was a great buyer of books on all kinds of subjects, and accumulated a large and varied library, particularly rich in historical works. He loved his canaries and budgerigar, and the animals at the Zoo, and this no doubt stimulated his interest in the immense subject of the animal reservoirs of human disease, so important in tropical medicine.

Scott was a delightful companion, full of humour, which on occasion could be pointed, but which was modified by a rather old-world courtesy. Physically he was slight, good-looking, and always immaculately dressed. He moved with ease and assurance among the leaders of his profession and made many friends. His first wife died in 1933; his second wife, Eileen Anne, daughter of the Rev. R. P. Prichard, survives him.

CHARLES WILCOCKS

Dr. E. Leonard Gill

E. LEONARD GILL died in Cape Town on July 5. He was born in Reigate and after attending a Friends school, entered Owens College, Manchester, graduating

in 1899. He then became a member of the museum staff at Manchester and so gained experience in museum arts and management. Later, he became curator of the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne. Here he was responsible for large, important collections of fossils, birds and marine invertebrates, as well as the general contents of an old-established natural history museum. The maintenance of this large building, very old-fashioned in its design and furnishing, also fell to him, and the funds of the Society which owned it were, even then, inadequate.

Gill served in the Friends Ambulance throughout the First World War, returning to the Museum, when he began to modernize some exhibits. In 1922 he accepted a post in the Royal Scottish Museum; but in 1924 he became director of the South African Museum, Cape Town.

In the seventeen years he spent in this post, Gill revolutionized the Museum; its size was nearly doubled, the exhibition galleries were modernized and enlarged, and the scope of the Museum was extended to cover not only important South African antiquities, but also some art collections. Gill wrote descriptive labels, in Africaans as well as English, which brought the Museum into much closer touch with the general public, and increased this contact by circulating specially made museum cases to schools.

Gill published a few useful papers on fossil fish; but his chief interest was in birds. On his first visit to the Museum in Cape Town, he found on his table a dead bird just picked up and brought in. On its leg was a ring which Gill himself had placed there at a nest in the Farne Islands. Gill found that there was no small cheap book about South African birds, so that it was impossible for any ordinary man to know them, and thus to observe them intelligently. Hence he wrote an inexpensive book with many small but admirable figures drawn by Gill himself and his artist sister. This book was most useful, not only in South Africa but even farther north, and it has gone through several editions.

Gill added to the general interest in natural history, by newspaper articles in Africaans as well as English, and by lecture talks. Also he founded the South African Ornithological Society, which recently celebrated its silver jubilee.

Gill was a man of unusual character, willing to take great trouble to help anybody, friendly and helpful to everyone.

D. M. S. WATSON

Mr. John A. Marsh

THROUGH the death of John Anderson Marsh, which occurred on July 1, the Chester Beatty Research Institute (Institute of Cancer Research: Royal Cancer Hospital) has lost a greatly valued chief technician who had given it his loyal service for more than forty-six years. Appointed to the Institute on its foundation in 1909, he then worked for its first director, Alexander Paine, and for Casimir Funk and Jack (later Sir Jack) Drummond, at that time engaged in investigations of the 'vitamines' and of the amino-acid composition of tumours, respectively. Under his later directors, Archibald Leitch and Sir Ernest Kennaway, he played an essential part in assisting their contributions in the field of chemical carcinogenesis, first in studies with coal-tar, and later in the great development of the cancer-producing hydrocarbons.

A man of wide interests and much kindness, Marsh inspired friendship in all his colleagues, not least in the numerous workers from abroad whom he had helped over the years, and who mourn him equally with ourselves. He had seen great changes

in research, and throughout his long service at all times embodied the true worth of the chief technician. Both for his unique contribution and for his personal qualities, he will be ever gratefully remembered by all who knew him. ALEX. HADDOW

NEWS and VIEWS

New President of the British Association :

Prof. P. M. S. Blackett, F.R.S.

At the meeting of the General Committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science held in Sheffield on August 29, Prof. P. M. S. Blackett was elected to succeed Sir Raymond Priestley as president. Prof. Blackett was born in 1897 and educated for the Navy at Osborne and Dartmouth. After war service during 1914-18 he studied at Cambridge, where he took Part I of the Mathematical Tripos and Part II of the Natural Sciences Tripos in physics. He then worked under Rutherford in the Cavendish Laboratory until 1933. From 1933 onwards he has been successively professor of physics at Birkbeck College, London, University of Manchester and the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London. He received a Royal Medal from the Royal Society in 1940 and was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1948.

Prof. Blackett and those working with him have made significant contributions to three main fields of physical discovery: the interaction with matter of fast particles from radioactive sources, the nature of the particles in the cosmic rays and the magnetism of the Earth. During 1921-31 he was chiefly occupied with the development and operation of automatic Wilson cloud chambers and their application to the precise measurement of the parameters involved in collisions between alpha-particles and atomic nuclei. By painstaking work he showed that very infrequent inelastic collisions with nitrogen produced the then unknown isotope oxygen-17 by the capture of the alpha-particle and the ejection of a proton. In this period also he verified, with Champion, the Mott theory of the wave-mechanical diffraction scattering of slow alpha-particles. From 1931 onwards he applied and extended the cloud chamber technique to the study of the collisions involved in the cosmic rays, establishing (with Occhialini) the existence of nearly equal numbers of positive and negative electrons. This confirmed Anderson's discovery of the positive electron a few months before and extended it by giving strong evidence for actual pair production. In addition, the 0.5-MeV. scattered gamma-rays were identified as arising from the annihilation of positive and negative electron pairs. With a large magnet and a new counter-controlled cloud chamber, Blackett and his colleagues proceeded to study in more detail the nature and the energy spectrum of cosmic ray particles. Much valuable work on cosmic ray showers was carried out under his direction, and he himself explained the negative temperature coefficient of the cosmic rays in terms of the decay of the μ -meson.

These detailed studies led to a discovery which opened up the entirely new field of 'strange' particles when Rochester and Butler in Blackett's laboratory in 1946 found the first neutral V -particles and in 1947 the first charged V -particles. The identification by the Manchester team of V^0 decay into a proton and a pion and of the probable division of a V^+

particle into two pions, together with the best determination to date of the life-times of V^0 and V^+ neutral particles, are outstanding further discoveries. These were made possible by Blackett's energetic action in moving the equipment to the observatory of the Pic du Midi. From 1947 onwards he interested himself in the possibility, originally discussed by Schuster, of a 'fundamental' connexion between the angular momentum of a large rotating body, such as the Earth, and its magnetic field. Although experiments conducted and suggested by him gave no support to this idea, the sensitive magnetometer designed for this work has been used by him and by Runcorn at Cambridge in remarkable studies of palaeomagnetism which give promise of throwing new light on polar wandering and continental drift.

Chemistry in Swansea : Prof. C. H. Hassa

Prof. C. H. HASSALL, professor of chemistry in the University College of the West Indies, has been appointed to the chair of chemistry in University College, Swansea (University of Wales), in succession to Prof. C. W. Shoppee, who has accepted the chair of organic chemistry in the University of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Prof. Hassall graduated in the University of New Zealand in 1941 and after war service went with a senior studentship of the 1851 Exhibition to Cambridge, and carried out research in organic chemistry with Sir Alexander Todd. In 1948 he accepted the chair of chemistry in the young University College of the West Indies, where he has been responsible for building up a new department, involving the design of laboratories, recruitment of staff and the development of teaching and research. During this period he has also managed to visit Harvard, where he worked in Prof. R. B. Woodward's laboratory for a time, and a number of university departments and industrial research laboratories in England working on organic natural products. These activities explain in part the close links which Prof. Hassall has formed between his department and industry in the West Indies and with several pharmaceutical firms in Europe. He has served as the United Kingdom representative on the Caribbean Research Council and is a member of the advisory committee of the Institute of Social and Economic Research, Jamaica. His research work has been mainly in the field of the structural chemistry of organic compounds of biological activity such as steroids, polypeptides and antibiotics.

Weather Forecast Service in Britain by Telephone

THE automatic weather forecast service by telephone which came into operation in Britain at midnight on March 4 has been a great success. In the first month 561,377 calls were received from the public, a number far exceeding the number made to the London Forecast Office in any month; the number of calls to the Office during February was 17,128. This experience is similar to that in other countries. The number in the first month was