

## OBITUARY NOTICE.

ALFRED FRANCIS JOSEPH.

1881—1951.

ALFRED FRANCIS JOSEPH was born in London on May 9th, 1881, and died at Truro on October 5th, 1951. Brought up in the Jewish faith, he matriculated in 1899 and was registered as an internal student at Birkbeck Institution (now Birkbeck College) in 1901 but transferred to the Royal College of Science in 1902. He was awarded 1st class honours at the Bachelor of Science Examination in 1904. During these years he came under the influence of such men as Professor John Perry, Sir H. E. Armstrong, Professor H. L. Callendar, and Sir William Tilden. His first paper, written in collaboration with J. E. MacKenzie, appeared in the *Transactions* in 1904. Two years later the same journal had Joseph's paper on The Reciprocal Displacement of Acids in Heterogeneous Systems. This was followed by a Note on the Estimation of Iron in Ferric Solution and by a short paper on the Estimation of Formic Acid: both of these appeared in the *Journal of the Society of Chemical Industry*, 1910, the latter paper being communicated from the Ceylon Medical College in Colombo.

After teaching for two years at Wimbledon College, a Roman Catholic Institution, Joseph had gone to Ceylon in September 1906 to take up the post of Science Master in the Royal College, which he left in January 1908 to become Professor of Chemistry at the Ceylon Medical College which now forms part of the University of Ceylon. Here he was able to introduce Studentships for men in training as teachers of science; he published a text book on Practical Chemistry, and maintained a steady stream of research work. Much of this consisted in Experimental Investigations on the Properties of Bromide Solutions and this became the title of a thesis for which Joseph received the Degree of Doctor of Science in chemistry from the University of London in 1916.

From 1915 to 1917 Joseph was acting Registrar of the Ceylon Medical College. He left Ceylon in 1917 to enter the Ministry of Munitions of War. In association with Professor T. M. Lowry and Professor E. N. da C. Andrade he worked in London during the latter part of the war on problems concerned with shell filling. He had to visit the United States in connection with these duties and remained indifferent to danger from submarine attack owing as he said to his more immediate concern with sea sickness.

After the war Joseph became Government Chemist in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. During the period 1920—1929 he built up a small team of research chemists whose work was mainly directed to a new field of work, the assessment and solution of problems arising from irrigation of the alkaline and somewhat saline clay of the Sudan Gezira. This enterprise, involving an investment exceeding £20 million and forming an important experiment in co-partnership, met with difficulties which, in due course, were overcome. The good repute of agricultural research in the Sudan is due in part to Joseph's insistence on high professional standards both in recruitment of staff and in output of publishable work. He was instrumental also in bringing to the Sudan the latest techniques in agricultural experimentation by promoting successive visits by Sir John Russell, E. M. Crowther, and F. G. Gregory. Joseph's own work in soil science gained immediate international recognition: many technical papers were published though it must be admitted that the Publication Committee of the Chemical Society soon refused to accept any more articles on the composition and properties of clay.

In 1929 Joseph left the Sudan and under Sir John Russell started the Imperial (now the Commonwealth) Bureau of Soil Science. In this case also his outspoken, austere, but not ill-natured, rejection of second-rate work set within two years the high standard that the Bureau has since so successfully maintained.

In 1931 Joseph gave up the scientific work in which he had been continuously successful and began to study for the Anglican Ministry. He was ordained priest on Trinity Sunday 1933 and in 1937 was admitted to the Society of St. John the Evangelist, better known as the Cowley Fathers. After his ordination and religious profession he became well versed in Theology and liturgical matters. Besides being Superior of St. Edward's House in Westminster he was for several years Deputy Assistant General of the Society and sub-warden of the Fellowship of St. John. Members of the Fellowship in every part of the country have often spoken most warmly of the unsparing help he has given them. By his wise counsel he gave much help to various communities. Shortly before he died he became Secretary to the Advisory Council for Religious Communities in the Anglican Church.

Joseph married in Colombo Miss Ida Guinivere O'Donoghue, B.Sc., eldest daughter of the Rev. E. G. O'Donoghue, a clergyman-historian in his day. Most unfortunately she died of enteric about six months later. Her influence remained evident throughout the following 44 years of Joseph's life.

H. GREENE.