

CYRIL NORMAN HINSHELWOOD

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1897-1967

With the recent death of Sir Cyril Hinshelwood, the world in general and British science in particular has lost an intellectual genius of most unusual calibre and range of interests.

Almost the whole of Hinshelwood's working life was spent in Oxford. For sixteen years he was Fellow and Science Tutor of Trinity College, during which time he not only showed himself to be an outstandingly successful teacher but also carried out, in collaboration with a number of his students, some of his most important research on the kinetics and mechanism of gaseous reactions. Shortly before the Second World War, Hinshelwood was elected to succeed F. R. Soddy as Dr. Lee's Professor of Chemistry. He was a conscientious and efficient administrator and the task of managing two large laboratories under wartime conditions inevitably made it difficult for him to continue to take the same interest and pleasure in teaching. Despite his greatly increased work for outside bodies, however, his research continued to flourish and now included the application of kinetic theories to the growth of bacteria. This aspect of his work became increasingly of interest to him in later life and, when he eventually retired from the Chair at Oxford after a tenure of twenty-seven years, he continued research in this field (in addition to his many other activities) as a Senior Research Fellow at Imperial College, London.

Hinshelwood received numerous honours including a knighthood, the Order of Merit, the Nobel Prize for Chemistry (jointly with N. N. Semenov) and a large number of honorary degrees and medals as well as the membership of many foreign academies and societies. He was President of the Chemical Society during the Centenary Celebrations and was Foreign Secretary and subsequently President of the Royal Society.

He was a member of the Faraday Society for many years but as a result of his preference for studying the results of other workers in written form he attended only rather rarely Discussions of the Society and indeed other scientific meetings. Nevertheless he took a keen interest in the work of the

Society, serving as a Member both of Council and of the Publications Committee and as a Vice-President during two separate terms of office. Eventually, in spite of his many other commitments, he allowed himself to be persuaded to become President of the Faraday Society in 1961-2. In this capacity Hinshelwood, with his characteristic thoroughness, played a full part in the Society's activities and took an interest in all aspects of its work. He presided at all the General Discussions held during his period of office including a meeting at The Centre D'études Nucleaires De Saclay in France where his well-known linguistic ability proved to be of considerable value. Among Hinshelwood's many assets as President was his ability to see problems in their proper perspective and not to allow emotional factors to interfere with his judgment.

Although some people had the impression that Hinshelwood was somewhat aloof and detached, he was in fact a man of great warmth and kindness. Some of those who worked alongside him, albeit in a relatively junior capacity, probably got to know him better than did many of his colleagues of equivalent standing. Those who were closely associated with him will certainly feel a sense of deep sorrow at the passing of a man with whom it was a pleasure to work and whom it was a privilege to know.

C. F. CULLIS