

OBITUARY NOTICES.

JOSEPH JOHN BLACKIE.

1895—1946.

THE sudden death on October 30th of Joseph John Blackie removed a chemist of great eminence in pharmaceutical circles, who was keenly interested in the progress of research. A native of Duns, Berwickshire, he served his apprenticeship there, and qualified in pharmacy in 1920. Blackie saw service in the First World War as Sergeant and Staff-Sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Gallipoli, Egypt, and France, and then joined the staff of Duncan Flockhart & Co. as assistant laboratory manager. In 1922 he secured the Ph.C. qualification, was appointed laboratory manager in 1924, and in 1930 became a partner in the firm he had joined ten years previously, and with which he was associated throughout his working life. Blackie's responsibilities now involved the control of the research and manufacturing side of the business in Edinburgh, but this did not deter him from joining the very active research school of the late Professor George Barger, F.R.S. Here his wide botanical knowledge and manipulative skill served him in good stead in an investigation of the alkaloids of the genus *Senecio*, for which the University of Edinburgh awarded him the degree of Ph.D. in 1935. Together with Barger, Blackie used to scour the countryside for the raw material for his researches, with great pleasure and profit to both collaborators (*J.*, 1936, 743; 1937, 584).

Dr. Blackie was admitted a member of the Edinburgh Merchant Company in 1932 and elected a governor of the Heriot-Watt College in 1934, a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry in 1936, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1937. He played a great part in the affairs of the North British Branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, having been appointed to the Board of Examiners for Scotland in 1925; he was serving as Chairman of the Board at the time of his death, having held that office since January 1938. In his examining, and in the Chair, Blackie, although he would never tolerate any lowering of standards, always had the interests of the candidates at heart, and the author of this notice recalls with great pleasure the happy times spent as a co-examiner in his company.

The onset of war in 1939 greatly increased Blackie's responsibilities owing to the depletion of his staff, the increased demand for anaesthetics, and the vulnerability of the works from the viewpoint of fire risks, and he worked untiringly throughout the whole period. It is to be feared that his refusal to take even the briefest of holidays played no inconsiderable part in hastening his untimely death. A man of the highest character and ability, his unassuming and kindly disposition brought him many friends who deeply mourn his loss at the height of his powers.

E. G. V. PERCIVAL.

ROBERT SELBY MORRELL.

1867—1946.

ROBERT SELBY MORRELL was born on August 20th, 1867, at Manningham, Bradford, and attended Bradford Grammar School. In 1886 he went to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, graduated in 1890, received his M.A. degree in 1894, and became a Fellow of his college in 1896, which status he retained until 1904. Between 1890 and 1893 he was at Wurzburg and received the Ph.D. degree.

In 1904 Morrell joined the staff of Messrs. Mander Bros. Ltd., the well-known and old-established firm of paint and varnish manufacturers at Wolverhampton, as Chief Chemist, which position he retained until 1930. In the early years of the century he published some papers concerned with the oxidation of carbohydrates, but the move to Wolverhampton changed the whole course of his future work.

A scholar, a first-class chemist trained in the classical manner, an industrious and capable experimenter, he chose the difficult path of drying-oil chemistry, convinced of its scientific importance and confident that a strictly scientific approach to problems of industrial and technical interest would be rewarded. Thus began many years of accurate and painstaking work and constant breaking of new ground, in a field in which he stood for years, at least as far as this country was concerned, practically alone.

The scientific literature, notably the *Journal* of the Chemical Society, contains a wealth of papers, bearing his name, on drying-oil chemistry. In later years he concentrated mainly on

the problem of the mechanism of autoxidation and polymerisation of drying oils, particularly tung oil, from which he prepared derivatives in pure form suitable for experimental study. He stressed continually the differences in reactivity of the three double bonds of the elæostearic acid molecule and finally cleared the ground with the different maleic anhydride adducts of α - and β -elæostearic acid, which he isolated and characterised; he concluded that in the α -compound the double bond near to the carboxyl group remained free, and in the β -compound, the bond remote from the carboxyl. These adducts prepared by Morrell were used by Rideal for the first studies of the autoxidation of drying oils by the surface film technique.

Three text books which he wrote "Varnishes and their Components", "The Chemistry of Drying Oils" (with H. R. Wood), and "Rubber, Resins, Paints & Varnishes" (with A. de Waele) are still standard works, and it should not be forgotten that they were produced at a time when such books were scarce. More recently, he edited "The Chemistry of Natural and Synthetic Resins" and "Synthetic Resins and Allied Plastics".

Morrell took a wide interest in art and artists and lectured on the Chemistry of Artists' Materials in London over the period 1931—1937; these lectures were published in book form in 1939. He also contributed the section upon Drying Oils for the *Annual Reports on the Progress of Applied Chemistry*.

Morrell was a prominent figure in the early days of the Oil and Colour Chemists' Association and was President during 1920 and 1921, in which office he succeeded Mollwo Perkin.

During the period 1920—1926, Morrell lent all his aid to the thesis that the obviously developing need of research in the paint and varnish industry must be met; when the Research Association of British Paint, Colour and Varnish Manufacturers was formed in 1926 he was a staunch supporter and gave freely of his knowledge and experience as a member of Council.

Throughout his life Morrell was an enthusiastic worker in what would be now called "further education". In his Cambridge days he lectured under the auspices of the Kent County Council and later for the Workers' Educational Association. For many years he and his wife, who died in July 1946, served the Wolverhampton centre of the Oxford University Extension Lectures as treasurer and secretary respectively.

He was a President of the Wolverhampton branch of the Historical Association, a member for 25 years of the Wolverhampton Rotary Club, and a co-opted member of the Corporation Art Gallery and Public Library Committee.

He was a staunch Churchman and a greatly admired and loved member of the community of Tettenhall Wood where he lived for thirty-five years. His friends and associates in a wider field also remember him as a rich and lovable personality who used his gifts freely and unsparingly in the service of all who called upon him.

L. A. JORDAN.
