

Obituary Notices

Sir James Currie, K.C.M.G., K.B.E.

IT is with deep regret that we have to record the death of Sir James Currie. Sir James had gone to Cambridge to attend a conference on animal pathology, and was staying with Mr. Will Spens, the master of Corpus Christi College. He retired at 11 p.m. on March 16, and on the following morning was found dead in his room.

Sir James had a distinguished career of public service, and, as he would have wished, died in harness. Son of the Rev. James Currie, principal of the Church of Scotland Training College, he was educated at Fettes (where he played in the first Rugby XV and the first cricket XI), and he obtained an exhibition at the University of Edinburgh and a scholarship at Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1888. After going down, he gained teaching experience at one of the schools of the Scottish Education Board in Edinburgh, his native town. His great opportunity came in 1899 when he joined the Egyptian Education Service. He embraced it magnificently. In the following year he was appointed principal of the newly founded Gordon College in Khartoum and director of education in the Sudan.

As a start, Currie formed a school for the training of the Sudanese as teachers. Inspired by Lord Cromer, many of whose attributes he possessed, he soon won his way into the hearts of the Sudanese. He was appointed a member of the Governor-General's council, and his work in the Sudan was perhaps his greatest achievement.

Relinquishing his posts in 1914, Currie returned to England, where he went in for farming; but during the Great War, in 1916, he undertook, as director of the new Labour Supply Department, the training of munition workers, and in 1918 he joined the Ministry of Labour, again in a voluntary capacity, as controller of the training department. He originated the idea of Government instructional factories, and when he retired, early in 1921, more than 25,000 disabled ex-service men had passed through his hands.

In the same year Currie was appointed director of the Empire Cotton Corporation, and a year later a governor of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, to the chairmanship of which he succeeded in 1927, after the death of Sir Arthur Shipley.

Scientific men were needed for the development of cotton-growing within the Empire, and Sir James initiated the system of scholarships for post-graduates tenable at the College in Trinidad, an example which was followed later by the Colonial Office under the Milner-Lovat Committee's scheme. Much work had to be done. As E. H. C. wrote in *The Times*: "Cotton was to be grown in a dozen different countries, each with a different climate and different conditions. There would be no uniform cotton seed which would suit each and all. First must come research in each country, experimental farms,

trials of various seeds, knowledge of constituents of soils. So, just as he had first to train teachers in the Sudan before he could have schools, he must now concentrate on soil-chemists and plant-breeders before he could have seed which would not bankrupt Colonial farmers. No other man in the Empire would have seen this so clearly or have understood so well how to give practical effect to what he saw."

Sir James was also a governor of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, a member of the council of Marlborough College and chairman of the directors of Dauntsey School. To the Cotton Corporation and the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture especially, his experience of education and research and his great powers of administration proved of inestimable value.

Sir James possessed exceptional strength of character. He had also a rich fund of humour, and this often found expression in original though apposite comments which relieved the monotony of many meetings which he attended. All who worked with him and for him, loved him and will treasure his memory.

Sir James was made C.M.G. in 1912 and a K.B.E. in 1920, and was promoted to K.C.M.G. in 1933. He was married in 1913 and is survived by his wife, Hilda Beatrice, daughter of the late Sir Thomas Hanbury of La Mortola, Italy.

Dr. Elihu Thomson

BY the death of Elihu Thomson on March 13, the world has lost one of the greatest of the pioneers of the practical applications of electricity. He was born in Manchester, England, on March 29, 1853, but his father, who was a skilled mechanic, emigrated to Philadelphia, Pa., in 1858. He was educated there and attended the Central High School, a well-known technical college. His love for experimenting and invention was probably inherited from his father. At first his chief interest lay in chemistry; after he had served his time as an analyst at a factory he returned to the High School to teach chemistry and retained this post for ten years until 1880.

Prof. M. B. Snyder tells how one day in 1875 Thomson transmitted ether disturbances from the first floor of the building to the sixth floor, where his detector was a brass door knob and an ordinary lead pencil. When the apparatus on the first floor was working a stream of delicate sparks passed between the point of the pencil and the knob. This happened twelve years prior to Hertz's celebrated verification of Maxwell's theory.

In 1880, Thomson went to New Britain, Conn., as electrician for the American Electric Co., and two years later in conjunction with Edward J. Houston founded the Thomson-Houston Electric Co. at Lynn, Mass. In 1892, this company was merged with the