

42A

British Empire. It was decided to inform Mr. Dreaper of the functions of the C.S. and I.R. outside the house of representatives, and also to bring his communication under the notice of Dr. A. C. D. Rivett, chief executive officer of the C.S. and I.R.

Victorian Branch

The second meeting of the analytical group will be held in Dr. W. J. Young's laboratory, biochemistry department of the Melbourne university, on February 19 at 8 p.m. An inspection will be made of the laboratories under Dr.

Young's charge and members will have an opportunity of seeing several lines of research work which are being carried out for the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. All members and students of the branch who are interested in analytical work are invited to attend and enrol in the group.

The hon. secretary will be pleased to supply information to members who contemplate attending the meeting of the A.A.A.S. at Brisbane in May, 1930. Circulars giving the tariffs of the principal hotels and boarding houses are available on application.

The Late Professor T. Brailsford Robertson

By Dr. S. W. Pennycuik*

Twenty years ago, Professor Brailsford Robertson, in speaking of his friend and former chief, Jacques Loeb, used these words: "He was one of the few men to whom it is given to lay the foundation stones of a newer and greater and more gracious civilisation, to furnish us with the instruments for eliminating some of the hard and ugly things of life, and to bend the forces of nature more fully to our service." This generous and sincere tribute may now be applied with equal sincerity to that brilliant and gifted student who in turn became one of the great leaders in the field of scientific endeavor.

Born in Edinburgh in 1884 Brailsford Robertson came to South Australia when 10 years of age. He graduated at the Adelaide university in 1905 taking honors in physiology, and whilst a student he gave a rather startling demonstration of those budding powers which soon were to burst into full bloom. Twelve months before graduation, at a time when ordinary undergraduates consider themselves fully occupied with receptive studies, Robertson was writing his "Outline of a Theory of the Genesis of Protoplasmic Motion and Excitation." Considering the circumstances it was an astonishing piece of work, and from any point of view it was no mean contribution to science. For those who care to read it, it will be found in the Trans. Royal Soc. of South Australia, Vol. 29, 1905.

Immediately after graduation he was attracted to California by the fame of the great Jacques Loeb, and the influence of this gifted scientist was to remain with him for the rest of his life. He spent five fruitful years as a colleague and co-worker of Loeb, and during these years his 40 or so publications securely laid the foundations of his scientific greatness. Whilst physiological subjects such as the central nervous system, muscular contractions, and so forth,

received his attention, his main work was on the structure and reactions of the proteins. He soon became recognised throughout the world as one of the authorities on proteins, and it is difficult to decide whether Loeb or Robertson was now the leader in this particular work. Robertson had soon realised the importance of physical chemistry in his branch of science, and he read, mastered and applied this subject in such a way as to make him one of the outstanding physical chemists of this time. One of the features of his work, which showed his genius, was his absolute disregard for many of the accepted doctrines, which it was almost sacrilege to deny. He lived to see his opinions vindicated.

In 1910 on Loeb's departure from California, Robertson had the honor of succeeding his former chief in the chair of physiological chemistry and pharmacology. For some years he continued his great work on the proteins and published his collected results in the well-known text-book, "The Physical Chemistry of the Proteins." The work is characterised by its originality, its fearless disregard for precedent, and by the vigorous, clear and extraordinarily thorough treatment. It has been translated into German and Russian, and its full value has only been appreciated in recent years. The book is typical of the man, and between its pages one can plainly read the author's individuality and strong force of character.

From 1910 to 1918 Robertson remained in California and intensively pursued his investigations. And now Loeb's influence began to appear more strongly. Loeb, as is well known, was concentrating his attack on some of the big secrets of nature, and for some time Robertson, following his lead, worked on the isolation and identification of oocytin, the active agent in the fertilisation process. Gradually Robertson began to leave his first love, the proteins, and to be

*University of Adelaide.