

OBITUARY NOTICE

BEATRICE EDGELL, 1871-1948

Professor Beatrice Edgell, Ph.D., D.Litt., was born in 1871 and died in 1948. She was educated at the Notting Hill High School and University College, Aberystwyth, where she specialized in Philosophy. She then went to Wurzburg to study, under Professor Kulpe, the then novel methods of experimental psychology. From 1897 till her retirement in 1933 she was on the staff of Bedford College for Women as head of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology, the title of Professor of Psychology being conferred by the University of London in 1927. During the period 1906-10 she served on the Senate of the University of London and from 1929-32 was President of the British Psychological Society.

She thus belongs to the period which saw Psychology develop from being merely a side line of Philosophy to its recognition as a separate discipline and later to its application to many practical problems. Her writings show signs of these changing points of view, and while she never lost sight of the value of Logic and Philosophy she helped by her writings and her teaching to further the new developments. She established one of the first experimental laboratories for psychology in this country and her earliest publication in the *British Journal of Psychology*, in collaboration with W. Legge Symes, is 'A study of the Wheatstone-Hipp Chronoscope' (1915) with the aim of determining 'the conditions and degree of accuracy of the chronoscope readings for reaction time experiments'.

Her published writings fall roughly into four groups, those of a philosophical character, those dealing with experimental work, those concerned with general theory and lastly those studying a practical problem of applied psychology. Thus the range of her interests was wide. Her *Theories of Memory* (1924) was a searching analysis of the theories of the various schools of thought. Her book *Mental Life* (1926) was written 'specifically for the students in the Social Science Department of Bedford College', and has proved of value to other students of applied psychology. In a different category is an article on 'The Government as Advertiser' published in the *Sociological Review* (1916) in which the criticisms urged are the same as much government advertising receives now (1948). Characteristically, however, she concludes that 'whatever may be our judgment on the ability with which this enterprise is being carried out, it is in itself a social experiment without parallel in our history'. After her retirement from Bedford College she occupied herself with work at a Child Guidance Clinic, and she continued to take an active part in the training of nurses in Psychology; as long as her health permitted she acted as examiner for the Royal College of Nursing. As recently as April 1946 she read a paper at the Annual General Meeting of the British Psychological Society, giving a history of the Society from its inception in 1901 to its incorporation in 1941.⁽¹⁾

It will be of interest to psychologists that she asserted that she could not read until about nine years of age and that on entering the High School she did not study music because of her backwardness in the general school subjects. This period, however, cannot have lasted long, since, even apart from her academic attainments, contact with her left no doubt of her high intellectual calibre.

⁽¹⁾ See *British Journal of Psychology*, xxxvii, 3; May, 1947.