

CENTENARIES

Hoffmann, Friedrich (1660-1742)

FRIEDRICH HOFFMANN, German doctor, was born at Halle in Saxony in 1660. His ancestors had been practising medicine for nearly two centuries. Friedrich was started on mathematics as a preparation for a medical career. Later he studied chemistry and became a very popular lecturer in the subject, even while he was studying medicine at Jena. Frederick the king of Prussia appointed him as the first professor of medicine at the University of Halle which he founded. His work in the university soon brought him international fame, and he was elected an honorary member of several learned bodies including the Royal Society of London. The king himself invited him to be one of his courtiers. But the envy and jealousy concomitant to court life drove him back to his university within a period of three years.

Hoffmann had a lucrative practice as a doctor. His 'Anodyne liquor' brought him quite a fortune. He was in the habit of using a few simple remedies; he even used to tell his patients "If you wish to preserve your health, avoid doctors and medicines." Hoffmann was a prolific writer. His collected works extend to eleven folio volumes. He was one of the first to go beyond the humoral theory of pathology then widely prevalent. His famous work was the *Medicine rationalis systematica*, in 9 volumes. It occupied him twenty years.

Hoffmann died November 12, 1742.

Strutt, John William (1842-1919)

JOHN WILLIAM STRUTT, third Baron Rayleigh, a British physicist, was born at Maldon, Essex, November 12, 1842. Though his early education was frequently interrupted by illness traced to his having been a seven months' child, he went to Cambridge in 1861 and took his tripos course under E. J. Routh. Senior wranglership, Smith's prize and a fellowship of Trinity, fell to him easily in 1865.

He succeeded as third Baron Rayleigh in

1873. This diverted his attention to agriculture for a while. Psychic research was another subject that fascinated him at that time; but he soon found that no definite conclusion could be obtained in the field. In 1876 he, therefore, returned to orthodox scientific work. In 1879 he succeeded Clark-Maxwell as Cavendish professor of experimental physics. In 1884 he resigned this post and began the pursuit of his researches in his own private laboratory at Tarling.

The *Treatise on the theory of sound* was published in 1877 and it holds the field, even now as an unrivalled classic. His first paper was published in 1869 under the title *Some electromagnetic phenomena considered in connection with the dynamical theory*, and it initiated a uniform flow of about nine papers per annum until the total number reached 446, five days before his death. They occupy six volumes of the collected papers.

The redetermination of the absolute electrical units was one of the routine items of work which he completed in his Cavendish days. His experimental determination of the densities of gases brought to him the collaboration of Sir William Ramsay and the pursuit of seeking an explanation for the different densities—differing by .1 per cent.—of two samples of nitrogen culminated in the discovery of Argon in 1895 and secured the Nobel Prize for the joint authors in 1904. He played no small part in the establishment of the National Physical Laboratory. But perhaps even more than the brilliance of his discovery or the far-reaching effect of the establishment of this laboratory, it is the thoroughness and clearness of his exposition and the flair of his writings that will make the future generation turn back to him again and again.

Rayleigh died June 30, 1919.

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