

OBITUARY NOTICE

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

THE distinguished British philosopher, Professor Alfred North Whitehead, O.M., died at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on December 30, 1947, at the age of eighty-six.

Whitehead was born at Ramsgate on February 15, 1861, the son of Canon Alfred Whitehead. He went to Sherborne and became in due course Captain of the School. In 1880 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1883 he was bracketed fourth Wrangler, and in the following year was placed in the first class of Part III of the Mathematical Tripos. He was elected a Fellow in the same year by his College, and later became Senior Mathematical Lecturer. In 1914, after spending a short time as lecturer in Applied Mathematics and Mechanics at University College, London, he was invited to become Professor of Mathematics at the Imperial College of Science. He held this post until 1924, when he accepted the Chair of Philosophy at Harvard. He and Mrs. Whitehead made America their second home, and spent many happy years there, surrounded by friends who both admired and loved them.

As is well known, Whitehead was the joint author with Bertrand Russell of *Principia Mathematica*, which appeared in three volumes between 1910 and 1913. This work holds a dominating position in the history both of logic and mathematics.

Whitehead gave much thought to education, and in 1929 his reflections were published in *The Aims of Education*. He also took a deep interest all his life in history, and papers on this subject appeared from time to time in various journals. A profound knowledge of history is revealed by his later philosophical books. As a mathematician he naturally gave much consideration to the theory of relativity, and in 1922 *The Principle of Relativity* gave an alternative rendering.

The last twenty years of Whitehead's life were largely given up to the adumbration of philosophic thought. First there appeared *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*, shortly followed by *The Concept of Nature*. His philosophy was fully given in three later books, *Science and the Modern World*, *Process and Reality* and *Adventures of Ideas*, which portrayed the ultimate entities of nature as organic processes in which teleological as well as efficient causes play a part. Aspects of this "Organic Philosophy" were also dealt with in *Religion in the Making*, *Symbolism*, *The Function of Reason* and *Modes of Thought*. Since a number of articles on Whitehead's Philosophy have appeared in *PHILOSOPHY* during recent years, readers will be acquainted with his view that the universe is both a passage or *process*, and something that is permanent, both temporal and eternal, and that an adequate metaphysic must include as complementary facets of the universe both the realm of the actual and the realm of the ideal.

All who knew Whitehead are agreed that not only was he endowed with outstanding intellectual gifts, but that he also was blessed with the kindest of natures and great charm. May Britain continue to produce similar sons from her genial soil.