

## OBITUARY NOTICE.

MURIEL WHELDALE ONSLOW.

1880—1932.

MURIEL WHELDALE, only child of John Wheldale, barrister, was born in Birmingham on March 31, 1880. She was educated at King Edward's High School in the same city, a school which at that period held the foremost position amongst girls' schools for science teaching. She entered Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1900, and subsequently took a first class in both parts of the Natural Sciences Tripos with botany as her principal subject. She was assistant lecturer in botany in her own college from 1906 to 1908. Her career as a research student started with a Bathurst studentship in 1904, followed by a Newnham College fellowship in 1909. It was at this period that the trend of her work was strongly influenced by the late William Bateson and her early research was concerned with the inheritance of flower colour in *antirrhinums*. From this her ambition was fired to pursue the study of genetics in its biochemical aspect. Those same anthocyanin pigments which she had first followed genetically she now worked at chemically, her studies in this field culminating in the publication in 1916 of her well-known monograph, *The anthocyanin pigments of plants*. This book established her reputation both at home and abroad, and deservedly so, for she was amongst the first to visualise and attempt to obtain a chemical interpretation of genetical data.

Her later work, from 1919 onwards, was concerned with the oxidase systems of the higher plants. In addition, from 1917 onwards, she worked for the Food Investigation Board, and from 1922 at the Cambridge Low Temperature Station, directing the chemical section of the team work there in progress on the changes involved in the ripening of fruit. Her results are embodied in the Annual Reports of the Food Investigation Board and will shortly be published in scientific form.

In 1919 Muriel Wheldale married Huia Onslow, who had recently entered the field of chemical genetics, and until his death in 1922 their work was closely associated. In her memoir of her husband (1924) Mrs Onslow has left the record of a man whose amazing courage and mental vitality enabled him to adopt an active biochemical career in circumstances when most people would have subsided into the life of a complete invalid. His great success in the face of incredible difficulties was in no small degree due to the encouragement and assistance he received from his wife. His triumph will always remain an inspiration to those who witnessed it.

Apart from a few years (1911 to 1914) at the John Innes Horticultural Institute, Merton, the whole of Mrs Onslow's career was spent in Cambridge; her activities were divided between the Botany School and the Biochemical Department, where her teaching and research did much to stimulate and maintain an interest in the botanical aspects of biochemistry. Her class in plant biochemistry formed a much valued unit in the teaching of advanced botany.

In 1926 she was appointed to a University Lectureship in Biochemistry, being among the first women upon whom the University bestowed such a form of recognition.

In 1931 her career as a teacher was marked by the appearance of the first volume of her text-book, *Principles of plant biochemistry*; it is a matter of deep regret that her illness and death occurred before the second volume had left her hands.

Through Mrs Onslow's death plant biochemistry is left to mourn the loss of a single-minded and devoted servant whom it can ill afford to spare.

M. S.