

A Great Popularizer of Science . . .

DR. EDWIN E. SLOSSON, Director of Science Service, died October 15, 1929, at 6:55 p. m.

As a great popularizer of science millions of readers knew Dr. Edwin E. Slosson. He was the man who made chemistry famous for the general public. As leader and inspirer of science's effort to hand on to the general non-technical reader the fruit of scientific research and knowledge, Dr. Slosson, director of Science Service, inaugurated a new relationship between the man in the laboratory and the man in the street.

Not quite a decade ago when far-seeing scientists and a great newspaperman, the late E. W. Scripps, joined in founding Science Service, the institution for the popularization of science, Dr. Slosson was chosen its editor. Already his book "Creative Chemistry" was selling like a novel. It gave the ordinary person the romance and facts of this great science that had played an important part in the war. Dr. Slosson's great energy and ability were thrown into his new task of relating to newspaper readers the facts and implications of all science in such a way that all might understand. And Science Service grew until now millions read its dispatches and articles in newspapers, magazines and books.

From Dr. Slosson's pen there came such books as "Chats on Science", "Snapshots of Science," "Keeping Up With Science" and "Plots and Personalities" written in collaboration with Prof. June Downey. His lay sermons

relating science with religion were published as "Sermons of a Chemist". Sir Oliver Lodge recommended his "Easy Lessons in Einstein" as the best book to convey some idea of the theory of relativity to the general reader. Thomas A. Edison wrote of him in a personal letter: "Slosson is a 'Star' in lucidity". His lectures were heard by thousands and they have been printed in textbooks, magazines and scientific proceedings alike. The most recent Smithsonian Institution report contains a recent address on "The Coming of the Coal Age". For several years he had been a regular contributor to *Collier's*.

Even during his last illness from organic heart trouble, he characteristically insisted upon knowing the complex structural chemical formula of one of the medicines that had been prescribed. This desire to know was coupled with an extraordinary ability to tell the ordinary person what he had found out about what scientists were doing.

Thirteen years as professor in the chemical laboratory at the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station gave Dr. Slosson recognition and experience as a chemist. But mixed with his love of science was his feeling and ability in literature. Both Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi, rival literary and scientific honorary societies, had claimed and initiated him when he was graduated from the University of Kansas, his native state. So when he was offered a position on the *Independent* magazine in New York

after he had worked on its staff in lieu of his vacation from university duties, he moved to New York and became a literary editor. Editor though he was in title and function, he remained a scientist and chemist, injecting into his magazine his explanations of science that found their full flower in his writings for Science Service.

As soon as Slosson, the young chemist, got a job he married May Preston, the first woman to receive a Ph. D. from Cornell University. In order to get even with his wife, as Dr. Slosson once put it, he had to secure a Ph. D. of his own which he did from the University of Chicago by working summers.

Dr. Slosson was born of old colonial, New England stock on both sides, coming from England or Scotland. He once wrote in a biography of himself: "He can boast (although he never does) of three Mayflower ancestors: Miles Standish, Elder Brewster and John Tilley." His father was one of the earliest of Kansas settlers who came from New York to help make Kansas territory a free state. Dr. Slosson said he derived his love of books from his mother, who was a New York schoolma'am.

His great part in the gigantic and never ending work of science popularization was the climax to Dr. Slosson's life and the most effective tribute of his associates in science and journalism will be to carry it on.

Science News-Letter, October 26, 1929

Each Science Shall Have Its Slosson . . .

Memorial services for Dr. Slosson were held by the Mount Pleasant Congregational Church on Sunday, October 20. On behalf of Science Service, Dr. William E. Ritter, honorary president, delivered one of the four short addresses. His tribute to Dr. Slosson's scientific work is printed below:

The closing event of a unique human career very noble from having made the most of its remarkable innate endowment and all the influences of the outer world which, from beginning to end, acted upon it. Thus may be characterized the life

of our dear friend and fellow-worker who has gone from among us.

In the few words that I can speak at this time I wish I might express something of my estimate of the value for human welfare of Edwin Emery Slosson's scientific work.

That Slosson was primarily a popularizer rather than an investigator is too well known to need insisting upon. But that he never for a moment lost sight of the fact that popularization is utterly futile—even dangerous—except on the basis of the most rigorous and conscientious research, is less generally

known and appreciated than it should be.

It is also too generally known to need saying in so many words that chemistry was the realm of nature in which he was technically trained, in which he had earlier done research, and in which he was later preeminent as a popularizer. His wide-reaching imagination, his penetrating reason and his facile command of language enabled him to speak of phenomena from many realms of nature with charming simplicity. But it was in the chemical domain that his success was transcendent. Nothing (*Turn to next page*)