

MEMOIRS

SIR GERALD HEMMINGTON RYAN, BART.

THE death of Sir Gerald Ryan has already been alluded to in feeling terms by the President at the Annual Meeting of the Institute, and the occasion calls for an acknowledgment in the pages of the *Journal* of the great services which Ryan has rendered to the profession. Although, in recent years, the state of his health, which had necessitated his wintering in warmer climates, had prevented his active participation in Institute affairs, it will be remembered by those members past middle age that for many years he was one of the most prominent participants in the proceedings at Staple Inn. Members of the younger generation, who may not have had the good fortune to become acquainted with his genial personality, will all be familiar with the name of one whose many contributions to the *Journal* have secured him a permanent place in the history of actuarial science.

Gerald Hemmington Ryan was born on 25 January 1861. After leaving school, he devoted his time to actuarial study, passed the three examinations in successive years, and qualified for the Fellowship at the age of 21. At the time of his death he was the doyen of the profession, having held the Fellowship degree for 55 years. He had also been a member of the Actuarial Society of America for 43 years.

Few men have left a record of such long and distinguished service in the various offices connected with the Institute. Ryan served 27 years on the Council in the period 1887-1917. He was elected Treasurer (1904-6), Vice-President (1897-1900), and President (1910-11). He acted seven times as Examiner, and was Editor of the *Journal* (1893-96).

During his office as President, he was created a Knight, and he was further honoured with a Baronetcy in 1919. He was a magistrate for Norfolk, Suffolk and London, and was High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1920. Other distinguished public services included membership of the committee for formulating the Government Scheme of Aircraft Insurance during the war, and of the committee for administering it, and he was Chairman of a committee appointed by the Treasury in 1916 to inquire into the working of the National Insurance Acts.

Not only was he one of the most prolific contributors of papers at the Institute Sessional Meetings, but he also wrote many other articles in the *Journal*. The subjects dealt with in these papers and articles, covering as they do a very wide range, are a clear indication of his versatility. They comprise the following:

- “On the Subject of Extra Risks considered in relation to a Hypothetical Table of Mortality based on the H^M Table”, xxiv, 19. (1882.)
- “On a Method for determining the Extra Premiums to be charged in respect to Two-Life Assurances”, xxiv, 305. (1884.)
- “On the Analogy between an Annuity-Certain and a Life Annuity”, xxv, 443. (1886.)
- “On the Method of estimating expected Deaths and expected Claims, with observations upon certain modes of deducing the number exposed to Risk of Death”, xxvi, 249. (1887.)
- “The Mortality Experience of the Marine and General Mutual Life Assurance Society in respect of Lives of Mariners, from 1852–79”, xxvi, 413. (1887.)
- “The Mortality Experience of the Washington Life Insurance Company”, xxviii, 220. (1890.)
- “Some Statistics of Female Assured Lives”, xxix, 71. (1890.)
- “On a method of determining the Gain or Loss from Mortality in an Annuity Company”, xxx, 189. (1892.)
- “On a means of calculating the Expected Death Strain in a Life Office”, xxx, 196. (1892.)
- “The Treatment of the Discontinuances in the British Offices’ Experience, 1863–93”, xxxi, 309, 313. (1894.)
- “Effect of a decreasing rate of interest on Annuities and Policy Reserves”, xxxii, 272. (1896.)
- (i) “On the Standard of Solvency in Life Assurance Companies as affected by Guaranteed Benefits”,
 - (ii) “On certain methods of reconstructing an insolvent Life Assurance Company”,
 - (iii) “Some observations on Insurance matters in Canada and the United States”, xxxii, 25, 33, 39. (1895.)

Actuarial subjects do not afford much scope for literary fluency, but it is due to Ryan to say that his lucidity and happy mode of expression make his contributions some of the most readable in the *Journal*. He would have been the last to claim that he added anything material to theoretical actuarial science. But a clear vision, an alert mind and a firm hold of fundamental principles enabled him to develop and throw new light on the application of our science to the practical subjects with which he dealt.

Although a memoir in this *Journal* should deal mainly with actuarial attainments and services to the Institute, it would be a colourless record of Ryan’s work which did not emphasize his personal qualities. The power for usefulness of an actuary depends not only on the soundness of his work and recommendations, but also on his ability to get things done. Ryan was particularly endowed with that ability. He had the faculty—to an unusual degree—of being able to explain actuarial principles to the uninitiated, in simple language, and this faculty together with his own confidence in his conclusions, inspired confidence in those

he was advising. To such attainments can be attributed, in no small degree, the brilliant success of his official career. It is not proposed in this memoir to give a history of his Insurance appointments. It is sufficient to say, as an indication of his outstanding ability, that, at the unprecedentedly early age of nineteen, he became Assistant Actuary of the "Marine and General", and that he ultimately rose to the distinguished position of chairman of one of our largest composite companies—the "Phœnix".

Ryan's own words can best express his opinion of the training afforded by the Institute. They are taken from his Presidential Address in 1910. "Looking back upon a career of varied responsibility, I have never ceased to feel deeply grateful to our Institute or to appreciate the immense value of the sound anchorage which its educational training provides, not only in the special department of insurance with which we more particularly deal, but in other branches falling outside our curriculum." And again—"It is not unlikely, moreover, that actuaries may come in future to be employed in Fire, Accident or Marine Companies or Departments, in all of which branches the desirability of skilled statistical methods and a knowledge of the laws of probability are being more and more appreciated." It may be mentioned that several men with actuarial qualifications serving under Ryan were promoted by him to responsible positions outside the Life Department of the Company.

One cannot conclude this notice without reference to personal qualities which endeared Ryan to those who had the privilege of serving under him. Amongst these were his keen sense of humour—possibly attributable to his Irish origin—his accessibility, his readiness with friendly advice and his encouragement of initiative. Several men, who have since attained distinguished positions with other Companies, served in their early years under him, and he always followed with kindly interest their subsequent careers. He will be held in affectionate remembrance by a very wide circle of friends and former colleagues.

A. T. W.

EDVARD PHRAGMEN

WE much regret to record the recent death of Professor Edvard Phragmén.

Phragmén had in his early years taught at Stockholm University and had published various papers in mathematical journals. He then became connected with insurance and when the Swedish Actuarial Society was started in 1904 he was much interested and became its second president, a position he retained for many years until his resignation in 1934.

Phragmén wrote little during the past twenty-five years but his influence was great and he encouraged others with ideas and sympathetic advice. He was never afraid of holding or expressing an opinion but did not allow differences of view to interfere with personal friendships.