

Thomas Roland Briggs

September 2, 1887 — August 9, 1952

Thomas Roland Briggs, Professor of Physical Chemistry, died in Ithaca Memorial Hospital, on August 9, 1952, following a long illness. He was born in Huddersfield, England, on September 2, 1887, and came to the United States with his parents in January, 1888. He became a naturalized American citizen in 1918. He received his early education in the public schools near New York and after graduating from Flushing High School, he entered Cornell, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1909 and the doctorate in chemistry in 1913.

After serving two years as instructor in chemistry at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, he returned to Cornell in 1915 as Assistant Professor of Physical Chemistry, and was made Professor of Physical Chemistry in 1925.

Professor Briggs was known among his many students as a very stimulating and forceful teacher. Gifted with imagination, dignity of manner and a keen sense of audience feeling, Professor Briggs' lectures were models of good organization, precision and clarity. Many graduate students in the fields of chemistry, biology and soil science for more than a quarter of a century have cited him as an inspiring influence during their years of training at Cornell. One of them said of him recently, "He made science dynamic, and research an exciting adventure. He was a teacher."

His advent into the field of physical chemistry coincided with the rapid development of the field of colloidal chemistry. His work on electroendosmose and his summation of knowledge in the field was an important contribution to the field of plant physiology and soils technology, as well as to chemistry. His research work in the field of phase equilibria and emulsification was extensive. His contributions in these various fields were of immediate value in the development of industrial processes. He recognized the practical application of his research work and served effectively as consultant to various corporations.

Professor Briggs was an ardent fisherman and loved to take a fishing trip with friends or his sons to some local stream or to some distant lake or stream in Canada or his summer camp in New Hampshire. As a hobby, he became very interested in the history of American railroads and maintained an extensive library on the development of the various systems.

He was a member of Phi Kappa Tau and Alpha Chi Sigma fraternities and of the American Chemical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Francis Ingalls Briggs, and his four children, Lynton and Adelaide, of Ithaca; George, of Cambridge, Massachusetts ; and Gifford, of New York City, all of whom graduated from Cornell.

In the death of Professor Briggs, Cornell has lost a devoted alumnus and teacher, whose passing has brought a deep feeling of personal sorrow to his former students, his colleagues in chemistry and to other friends on the campus.

Lewis Knudson, A. W. Laubengayer, M. L. Nichols