G. P. THOMSON SAYS

Emphasis In Physics Shifting

By ALFRED LOWEY-BALL

Speaking fluently with a pronounced English accent, Sir George Paget Thomson, Noble Prize-winning physicist and Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, declared that it was his hope man’s space interests be developed along scientific rather than military lines.

The topic of Sir George’s lecture, “Fifty Years of Physics and Their Consequences,” allowed him to range over the last half-century freely, picking out the significant achievements in physics. He stressed their relevancy to the student, the teacher and the public. In 1912 physics had little practical effect upon the world; now, everywhere that study is respected and served.

AMONG THE more practical manifestations of physics, Sir George mentioned the radio, the aeroplane and the television while in the theoretical field he pointed to the Bohr atom, the acceptance of Einstein’s Relativity, the quantum theory, crystallography, the atom bomb and the present-day exploits in space.

YET FOR ALL those brilliant attainments, Sir George singled out the electronic computer for special praise. As an explanation he used an analogy between this machine and the invention of printing.

The British Noble Prize-winner sees in the past half-century the culmination of a long transistional period, stretching from Copernicus to Einstein. The Renaissance had proclaimed anew the importance of man, but then, “emphasis shifted from man to earth, to sun, to our galaxy and now to nowhere in particular.”