

staying with his daughter and son-in-law in England not long before the War, but unfortunately returned to Belgium and, when the German invasion occurred, he and his wife fled to France, without being able to reach Great Britain; after the collapse of France they returned to Louvain. It was the second time he had been made homeless by the Germans, but in the War of 1914-18 he had been able to get to Britain and continue his work.

He studied at Louvain, and after making agricultural journeys in North Africa and Brazil, he returned there in 1901 to initiate a course in tropical agriculture. In 1910 the Belgian Government recognized the necessity for developing the agriculture of the Belgian Congo and appointed him director-general. He visited on a study mission the Dutch Indies and the British tropical Empire, and used the experience thus gained in organizing the agriculture of the Congo. It was necessary to provide schemes covering the needs of both Belgian colonists and native cultivators. One of the features which was being watched with interest was the introduction of certain compulsory crops into the native agriculture for the benefit of the native.

Prof. Leplae was one of the leading Continental authorities on tropical agriculture, and his papers issued by the Belgian Ministry include some of the best published on the Belgian Congo. He became favourably known in Great Britain as the result of a report of an agricultural journey in the Congo showing the marked progress that had been made since the Belgian Government had taken over the country in 1908. Native agriculture had been much developed by the extension of rice, oil palm, cotton, rubber and other crops, and although few Belgians had gone out as planters, the living conditions had been so improved as to make possible a considerable extension of plantation industry. A Botanic Garden and Experiment Station had been established at Eala on the equator, and there were other experimental farms in other parts of the country, among them, at Api, a station for the study and the rearing of elephants.

Prof. Leplae's special interests were the conservation of the soil and the development of livestock. He published several important papers on the latter subject and did pioneering work on the conditions necessary for the healthy growth of the animals. The best known is his long report "Organisation et exploitation d'un élevage au Congo Belge", the first edition of which was published in 1926 and the second in 1933; this dealt mainly with cattle; a later report dealt with sheep.

Others of his papers dealt with coffee and with quinine; he early realized the danger of allowing the Congo to become too dependent on the Dutch Indies and advocated a wider culture of cinchona in the Congo.

Leplae will long be remembered both for his contributions to scientific agriculture and for his charming personality. He was an ideal president of an international gathering; at one of the last of these before the War, the Congress of Tropical and

Sub-Tropical Agriculture, held at Tripoli in March 1939, he presided with great distinction, and, in spite of the strained situation and the haunting fear at the back of everyone's mind, he carried the meeting through with complete success. He had a perfect command of English, and understood well and deeply sympathized with English ideals without abating in any way his profound affection for his own country.

E. J. RUSSELL.

#### Dr. R. P. Hobson

By the death of Dr. R. P. Hobson at Bangor on April 12 at the early age of thirty-nine, agricultural science and biochemistry have lost a very able research worker. Dr. Hobson came to Bangor in 1934 to work on the sheep maggot problem in co-operation with the late Dr. Maldwyn Davies. His previous researches at Rothamsted and the London School of Tropical Medicine fitted him admirably for this work, funds for which were provided by the Agricultural Research Council. His publications dealing with this subject included ten studies (two in the Press) in the *Annals of Applied Biology*, and, in addition, contributions were made to the *Biochemical Journal*, *NATURE* and *Agriculture*.

The advances Hobson made in these studies are of fundamental importance, and his technique for attracting flies to oviposit on sheep, developed from a study of the chemotropism of the flies and the chemistry of the fleece, has been universally adopted. Workers in Australia, where sheep maggot research has proceeded for much longer and on a much bigger scale than in Great Britain, held Dr. Hobson's work in high esteem, and I know that they will regard their loss as being as great as ours. His more recent work on the effect of suint on sheep dips and the toxicity of calomel to blow-fly eggs is of far-reaching importance. Proposals for developing the ecological side of blow-fly investigations are being examined by the Agricultural Research Council. It was intended that this ecological work should run parallel with Dr. Hobson's researches, and his death at the present juncture is an incalculable loss.

Although not physically strong, Dr. Hobson's health improved after coming to Bangor, and his death after undergoing a major operation came as a great shock to all his friends. His colleagues at the School of Agriculture have suffered a grievous loss, and they offer their deepest sympathy to his widow, who is a member of the same staff. I. THOMAS.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Mr. John Crompton, O.B.E., former president of the Textile Institute, Manchester, on May 31, aged seventy-eight years.

Mr. R. L. Hobson, C.B., keeper until 1938 of the Department of Oriental Antiquities and of Ethnography in the British Museum, on June 5, aged sixty-eight.

Admiral Sir Frederick Learmonth, K.B.E., C.B., hydrographer of the Navy during 1919-24, on June 3, aged seventy-five.