

make progress and fell into debt. Beginning in 1906, a Commission from the University of London considered the possibility of incorporating them into the University and making them the centre of a Botanical Institute, but the scheme was not adopted. Since the war the gardens have taken on a new lease of life. An energetic Superintendent has been appointed, who has already increased considerably the utility and the amenities of the gardens. Ground has been set apart for genetic experiments under the direction of Prof. Ruggles Gates, of King's College, London. Several hard tennis courts have also been built, which are a considerable source of income.

In 1919 a Government Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir David Prain, to consider how the work of the Royal Botanic Society could be made more useful from the scientific and educational point of view. Definite recommendations were made, which it is hoped will be carried into effect as funds become available. The recommendations included (1) the establishment of a School of Economic Botany, where a knowledge of economic and tropical plants and their products could be obtained; (2) an Institute of Research, especially on the living plant and its physiology; (3) a centre for teaching in horticulture; and (4) courses in school gardening for teachers.

When these are all carried out they will involve an annual expenditure of about 3000*l.* for salaries and expenses, and an initial outlay of some 5000*l.* for laboratories and equipment. Such an Institute of Economic Botany would be of enormous value to botany in this country, and in particular would contribute much to the economic development of our tropical possessions.

It is highly desirable that the necessary funds for this purpose should be forthcoming in the near future, so that the reconstruction of greenhouses and other buildings, which has become essential, can be carried out in a scheme harmonious with the present arrangements of the gardens. Botany in Great Britain has occupied in some respects a unique position, especially in its many-sidedness and in the closeness of the relations which have usually existed with economic, agricultural, and horticultural interests, and an Institute of Botanical Research of the kind recommended by the Government Committee in 1919 would probably do more than any other measure for the advancement of botanical science throughout the Empire. Any public-spirited citizen who would set the example of subscribing funds for this purpose would earn the gratitude of all those who have at heart the development of botanical science for the welfare of mankind.

Obituary.

S. P. SMITH.

THE name of Stephenson Percy Smith, whose death is reported at New Plymouth, New Zealand, is probably more widely known than any other among students of Polynesian ethnology. Mr. Smith was born at Beccles in Suffolk, and arrived with his parents at the infant settlement of New Plymouth on February 7, 1850. In 1855 he entered the Government Survey Department, passing upwards through all grades and becoming Surveyor-General in 1889, a post which he held till his retirement in 1900. Among a number of important and arduous departmental undertakings carried through with conspicuous ability were the survey following the great eruption of Tarawera, and the mapping and charting of the Chatham Islands and the Kermadecs. His ability in affairs was recognised and made use of by the New Zealand Government on several occasions, perhaps most notably when he was dispatched to Niue, where he drew up the constitution under which that island has prospered ever since.

In spite of his varied services to the State, it is in another capacity that he will be best remembered, namely, as the leading authority on Polynesian traditions. A few months before his death a fourth edition appeared of "Hawaiki: The Whence of the Maori," a book which has been more widely read and more often quoted than any other modern work on Polynesia. In its latest form it has been considerably expanded, and it is weightier and more mature, even, than before. He published several other books dealing with the Maori, and a very large number of papers, every one of which is of value.

A service to ethnology almost as important as the publication of his own works was performed by Percy Smith in the capacity of president of the Polynesian Society and editor of its *Journal*. He was the most prominent of its founders in 1892, and he presided over

it and guided it until his death. Thirty volumes of the *Journal* have appeared, and the immense industry and the scholarship involved in editing them and in translating numberless papers published in them, would alone constitute a notable life-work. By thus providing a means for the rapid publication of ethnological research in New Zealand and the Pacific he performed a service for anthropology in that part of the globe probably greater than has been rendered by any other worker in the field. He was an honorary member of many scientific societies in different parts of the world, and in New Zealand had been honoured by a Fellowship of the New Zealand Institute, and by the award of the Hector Medal.

No one could meet Percy Smith without recognising the strength and range of his intellect. He rendered ready help alike to great and small. His loss will be felt not only by those who knew him personally and experienced his generous help, but by every student who begins research in the field of which he was the unchallenged master.

H. D. S.

WE notice with regret the announcement of the death, on July 27 last, of Dr. A. J. Harries. Dr. Harries, who was born in 1856 and received his medical education in London and Brussels, was well known for his work on electro-therapeutics and kindred subjects. Among a number of medical works which he published was "A Manual of Electro Therapeutics," issued in 1890; he was also the author of papers on the dangers and uses of electricity, including one contributed to the Leeds meeting of the British Association in 1890, in which it was pointed out that current strength, as well as voltage, is an important factor in estimating the danger to life from accidental contacts with "live" wires and structures.