

Obituary

PROF. FRAN JESENKO

YUGOSLAV science, and the University of Ljubljana in particular, has suffered an irreparable loss by the untimely death, on July 16, of Prof. Fran Jesenko, professor of botany at the University of Ljubljana, in consequence of an accident in the Julian Alps.

Jesenko was born near Ljubljana in 1875. He was educated there and in Vienna, where he graduated in 1902. In 1901 he was appointed tutor to two Oriental princes at the Teresianum, the well-known college for boys in Vienna. A similar appointment in the family of Count A. Merveldt, with whom he travelled to Egypt, gave him a good opportunity to study the desert flora. He was afterwards commissioned by the Vienna Botanical Institute to study the flora of Petraea, and at that time he also visited Persia, whilst he was the first Slovene to travel through the Sahara. Upon his return from his travels he studied in Uppsala and Paris. It was during his stay in Sweden that he became an expert in ski-running, and throughout his life he always found time to cultivate that sport.

On his return to Vienna, Jesenko was appointed assistant to Prof. Czermak at the Vienna School of Agriculture, and in 1913 lecturer at the Vienna Botanical Institute. It was during this period that he began to devote himself to what may be described as his life work, namely, the evolving of a fertile cross between wheat and rye. At the fourth International Conference on Genetics, held in Paris in 1911, he was able to report the progress of his experiments in a paper, "Sur un hybride fertile entre *Triticum sativum* et *Seccale cereale*", whilst at the time of his death his research had advanced so far that the next step would have been the cultivation of the new cereal on a fairly large scale at an experimental farm.

Jesenko was corresponding member of scientific societies in Great Britain, America, Tokyo, Leningrad, Uppsala, and Paris. We may quote a few of his early works as follows: "Beziehungen zwischen der Lichtintensität und dem anatomischen Bau der assimilierenden Organe von Wüstenpflanzen" (1907); "Einige neue Verfahren die Ruheperiode der Holzgewächse abzukürzen" (1911-12); "Über das Austreiben im Sommer entblätterten Baume und Straucher" (1912); "Versuche über die Turgenzensdauer abgeschittener Pflanzensprosse" (1910); and "Über Getreide-spezies-Bastarde (Weizen-Roggen)" (1913).

In 1914 he was called up for active service, and during the War suffered seven months' internment in Bohemia, because of his sympathies with the Slav cause and the Allies. After the War, his opportunity came with the constitution of the new Yugoslav State. In 1919, Jesenko was first appointed lecturer, and then professor of botany at the University of Zagreb, and in the following year was transferred to the newly founded University at Ljubljana. Here he had all the hard

work, but also the satisfaction, which attends pioneer work. He soon conceived the plan of marking off part of the famous Triglav Lakes Valley as a national park, a plan which, in spite of great difficulties, he succeeded in realising.

On July 12, Jesenko set off to join his students at their headquarters in the Triglav Lakes Valley. It is assumed that whilst stepping aside from the steep path up the Komarcha Crag to look at some plant, his heavy pack caused him to overbalance on the precipitous and treacherous slope. He was found by some tourists a little later, his spine broken. He was removed to Ljubljana Hospital, where he died on July 16.

Jesenko was an able linguist and spoke fifteen languages. He possessed a beautiful singing voice; at one time indeed it seemed doubtful whether he might not choose the career of a public singer. His death will be widely deplored, but most of all by his students, whom he imbued with his own enthusiasm and devotion to his work, whilst all who had experience of his kindness and generosity will regret the premature death of the man no less than that of the naturalist.

MR. HERBERT KNAPMAN

IN Herbert Knapman, registrar of the University of Reading, who died on Aug. 14 at the age of fifty-two years, the lover of music and philosophy and the tireless organiser had long survived the brilliant mathematician who went to Cambridge from Rugby in 1898, was second wrangler in 1901, Smith's prizeman in 1903, and a fellow of Emmanuel College from 1903 until 1909. He joined the staff of University College, Reading, in 1903 as a lecturer in mathematics. If as a teacher he inspired awe of himself rather than love of his subject, the intense thoroughness which was his second nature brought a measure of success, and for a time he was even interested in the technique of imparting knowledge. Nevertheless, the steady transfer of his energies to the field of administration was a congenial development, and although the co-ordination of innumerable details seemed to his colleagues sometimes to be a waste of his intellect, there is no reason for supposing that the services which he performed, especially just after the War and at the time of the foundation of the University, so much better than a man less able could have hoped to do, withheld him from any more valuable work that he might have accomplished. The only work which he did as a mathematician was on the Subject Index of Pure Mathematics for the Royal Society Catalogue of Scientific Papers.

Knapman's lifelong passion was for music, of which he had a wide and expert knowledge. His one published paper described some experiments in which he observed a series of harmonic undertones excited by a tuning-fork; the observations were forgotten until the effect was rediscovered twenty years later, and it is evidence of the extraordinary delicacy of Knapman's ear that while he recorded

that ten of the undertones could be heard easily, Dr. Bond, with the same fork, could distinguish the fifth only occasionally.

In spite of lameness, Knapman was for the greater part of his life a strenuous pedestrian; latterly exertion told visibly on him, and he could not easily resign himself to physical inactivity. When eye-strain, though temporary, threatened further to limit his powers, he became acutely depressed, and the end followed rapidly.

An abrupt manner belied fanatical devotion to the University, and impatience with stupidity was balanced by a ready approval of good work. His judgment of men and affairs was valued not only by his colleagues at Reading, but also throughout the wide circle of educational administration in which he was a well-known personality. The perfection of his routine remains, permanently to strengthen the office with which he was associated, but the wit that lit up suddenly the stormiest or gloomiest of committee meetings and played like summer lightning on the rare evenings when he gave himself up to social enjoyment is lost, except in the memory of those who knew him. E. H. N.

DR. J. STUART THOMSON

THE many friends and old pupils of Stuart Thomson will sincerely regret to hear of his death, at the age of sixty-four years, which occurred suddenly after a short sea trip, at Swansea, on Aug. 28. For many years Stuart Thomson, who was the brother of Sir J. Arthur Thomson, was senior lecturer and demonstrator in zoology in the University of Manchester, and many generations of medical and science students in Manchester had the advantage of his patient and sympathetic teaching. His wide knowledge of his subject—and particularly of vertebrate zoology—gave him authority in his lectures, which impressed those who heard him.

Stuart Thomson studied at Edinburgh and Freiburg, and also under Prof. Studer in Berne, who gave him an interest in the group of Alcyonaria on which in later years he became a recognised authority. He held teaching appointments in bio-

logy at Edinburgh and Plymouth, and in 1903 became assistant Government biologist at the Cape of Good Hope. In 1910 he returned, going first to Bristol and then to Manchester.

Stuart Thomson was the author of many valuable papers on the Alcyonaria of South African waters, all of them characterised by his patient investigation and careful description of detail. The last of these papers, published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa*, in which the problems concerning the geographical distribution of the South African Alcyonaria are fully discussed, is of great general interest and a very remarkable piece of work.

In his later years Stuart Thomson devoted his spare time to the preparation of an elaborate memoir on the anatomy of the tortoise, of which no complete account has been published since the time of Bojanus.

Stuart Thomson resigned his post in Manchester in 1926, on account of failing health, and went to live with his sister in Cirencester, where he spent much of his time in preparing his book for publication. A few weeks ago he expressed the desire to go once more to sea, and his wish was fulfilled in a five days' cruise, but he died suddenly on landing at Swansea. S. J. H.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Dr. J. A. Clubb, formerly curator of the City Museum at Liverpool.

Prof. W. H. Sherzer, head of the Department of Natural Science at the Michigan State Normal College, known for his work in geological survey in Michigan, on July 17, aged seventy-two years.

Mr. S. Williamson Wallace, formerly director of the Egyptian Government College of Agriculture and director of agriculture for the State of Victoria, on Sept. 10, aged seventy-seven years.

Dr. A. Wilmore, formerly lecturer in geography at the Westminster Training College and principal of the Technical School, Colne, author of several well-known textbooks of geography and geology, on Sept. 6, aged seventy years.

News and Views

Forestry and National Economy

SIR JOHN STIRLING MAXWELL, formerly chairman of the Forestry Commission, has an article on "Forestry and National Economy" in the *Empire Forestry Journal* (vol. 2, No. 1, 1932). He confines himself to the work of the Forestry Commission in Great Britain and deplors the economy and cuts, which he admits were inevitable under existing conditions. Sir John himself gives the obvious reason why the heavy non-productive expenditure of the Commission could not hope to escape curtailment in the words: "It is unlikely that absolute continuity in the scale of forestry operations will ever be secured except where the expenditure in the forests is wholly met from the revenue they produce. It will be 30-40 years before this happy state of things can be reached

in Great Britain." But he points out that the Forestry Commission can seize the opportunity offered and consolidate the work already accomplished and overhaul methods of organisation. In the dominions, the period at which the forests will pay their way may be reached earlier. In India it has been reached already. In the Crown Colonies, where the form of government is more autocratic, continuity ought to be easy of achievement when once the authorities realise the fatal folly of economising on productive expenditure. This latter point has already been alluded to in *NATURE* (June 11, p. 845).

In discussing the present position of the Forestry Commission, Sir John gives a brief summary of the work of the first ten years. £9,000,000 was eventually sanctioned for the work to be carried out during the