

Obituary

PROF. G. C. BOURNE, F.R.S.

THE death on March 8 of Gilbert Charles Bourne, emeritus professor of zoology and comparative anatomy in the University of Oxford, will be deplored by his colleagues and many friends in Oxford and elsewhere. The sudden ending of such a remarkably active and useful life will be felt as a serious loss.

Since 1919 and up to his last illness, Prof. Bourne had, with characteristic energy, taken a prominent part on the Advisory Committee on Fishery Research to the Development Commission of which he eventually became chairman, succeeding Sir William Hardy in 1931. The success of the Freshwater Sub-Committee, of which he was also chairman, owed much to his untiring labours, his wide knowledge of biology and his business ability. No less valuable were his services to the Water Pollution Research Board of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Under his chairmanship of committees a thorough biological, chemical, and hydrographical survey of the River Tees was carried out and similar work undertaken on the Mersey.

Of a friendly, sanguine, and generous disposition, and actuated by a strong sense of public duty, Bourne was always ready to serve his country in peace or war. As a young man, he joined the Volunteers and the militia in which he rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel (Hon. Colonel). During the War he was chiefly engaged in the training of recruits.

Bourne's fame as an oarsman and a rowing coach is known to all. His versatility was indeed remarkable. There were few practical things he could not do and do well. He seemed equally proficient with the oar or the marine trawl, the microscope or the sporting gun.

Born in 1861, the son of Lieut.-Col. Robert Bourne, of Cowarne Court, Herefordshire, he was educated at Eton and New College, Oxford. Always interested in natural history, he studied zoology under Prof. H. N. Moseley, worked for a short time with Prof. Weismann in Freiburg, and, after taking his degree, started on his scientific career. A description of the anatomy of the millipede, *Sphaerotherium*, more especially of its stridulating organ, read before the Linnean Society in 1885, was his first publication.

In the same year Bourne visited Diego Garcia, that lonely tropical island set in the midst of the Indian Ocean. Here he studied corals, having joined that band of enthusiasts, including A. C. Haddon, S. J. Hickson, and G. H. Fowler, who did so much to advance knowledge of these and other cœlenterates. Diego Garcia is a typical coral atoll, and Bourne was among the first to treat atoll-formation not so much as a problem of geology as one to be attacked from the point of view of biology. His observations made on the spot of the conditions under which corals live and

grow, flourish and decay, enabled him to contribute an important paper to the *Proceedings of the Royal Society* in 1888. Meanwhile, on his return, he had begun a series of papers on the structure and growth of various corals, of which those on *Fungia* (*Quart. J. Micro. Sci.*, 1887) and on *Heliopora* (*Phil. Trans.*, 1896) are perhaps the most outstanding. He was also interested in the Crustacea, wrote on *Monstrilla* and other copepods; and later made an elaborate study of crabs of the family Raninidæ, for which he founded the new tribe *Gymnopleura* (*J. Linn. Soc.*, 1922).

The translation of Pelseneer's masterly volume on the Mollusca for the "Treatise on Zoology", undertaken at Sir Ray Lankester's suggestion, turned Bourne's attention to new fields, and led to the appearance of several works on little-known molluscs, particularly on the Neritacea and other gastropods (*Proc. Zool. Soc.*, 1909, 1911). These various contributions on the structure and classification of the Invertebrata are all distinguished for care and thoroughness, and for the excellence of the illustrations; for he was a patient and skilful dissector and a very accurate draughtsman. Together they form a solid and lasting addition to zoological science.

Bourne's more general works include "An Introduction to the Study of the Comparative Anatomy of Animals", one of the best elementary textbooks of the kind when it first appeared in 1900, and still a useful and trustworthy guide for the student. To Lankester's well-known "Treatise on Zoology" he contributed comprehensive parts on the Ctenophora and on the Anthozoa, including, of course, his beloved corals.

Soon after taking his degree, Bourne was elected fellow of New College, and later became tutor as well. For a couple of years he went to Plymouth as director of the recently established Marine Biological Laboratory. On his return to Oxford he taught for many years in the Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy. In 1906 he succeeded Prof. Weldon in the Linacre chair, which he occupied with distinction until his resignation in 1921. He was elected to the fellowship of the Royal Society in 1910, and was president of Section D (Zoology) of the British Association at Sheffield in the same year.

Bourne married the daughter of Sir John Croft, Bt., who survives him with one son and one daughter. The former, Capt. R. Bourne, is now member of Parliament for Oxford. E. S. G.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Sir John Jackson, O.B.E., deputy chief inspector of factories from 1920 until 1930, on March 19, aged sixty-eight years.

Dr. Thomas C. Porter, for many years science master at Eton College and one of the founders of the (Public Schools) Science Masters' Association, on March 31, aged seventy-three years.