

OBITUARIES

Sir Hubert Murray, K.C.M.G.

BY the death, on February 27, of Sir John Hubert Plunkett Murray, lieutenant-governor and chief judicial officer of Papua, the British Empire is the poorer for an outstanding figure, and there can be few of those who came into contact with "H.E." who have not felt also a sense of personal loss.

Sir Hubert was born in Sydney in 1861, and after a brilliant university career in England, was called to the Bar. He served with distinction in the South African War; but his real life-work began when he went to British New Guinea in 1904 as chief judicial officer. When this country was placed under Australian administration as the Territory of Papua in 1906, he was appointed acting administrator and shortly afterwards lieutenant-governor. He found himself responsible for a little-known country nearly twice the size of England, populated by a thin sprinkling of white settlers and an unknown quantity of Stone Age savages.

During Sir Hubert's administration a large part of Papua has been opened up. Although as time went on his administrative duties made it necessary to delegate the work of exploration to others, he kept in personal touch with as much of the Territory as he could, and it was on a tour of inspection that he died, after two days' illness, at the age of seventy-eight. But he always regarded as his main task the guidance of the country through the difficult initial stages of adjustment. From the first, he had to contend with the clash of interests between the two types of population, "for if an administrator succeeds in holding the balance even between the white settler and the native, he is open to attack from the partisans of both, and the applause of either will often be a sign that he is acting unfairly to the other". He made it clear, however, that he considered it the duty of the Papuan Government not only to foster the interests of the whites, but also "to show how the civilization of the twentieth century can be introduced among people of the Stone Age, not only without injury to them but to their lasting benefit and permanent advancement".

Taking the long view, Sir Hubert steadily opposed the alienation of any land which appeared necessary to the welfare of the natives, and the introduction of Asiatic labour, although he faced severe criticism on the grounds that he was hampering the development of the country. To meet the reasonable demands of the white settlers for labour, he introduced the indenture system, hoping that free labour might eventually be substituted. He thought that the future of the Papuans, if they were to be more than mere labourers, lay in the cultivation of land for themselves, so he instituted a system of native plantations. He also appointed village councillors, who might gradually be given more authority. At the same time, he realized the harm that can be

done to a primitive people by too swift destruction of their old life. His appointment of a Government anthropologist "to help us in reconciling an intelligent, though very backward, race to the inevitable march of civilization, and in finding the easiest way for its advance", has been amply justified.

His books, "Papua or British New Guinea" (1912) and "Papua of To-day" (1925), and his annual reports—very different from the usual lifeless documents—record, though modestly, the course of Sir Hubert's long tenure of office. Some measure of his achievement may be indicated by extracts from two addresses presented to him on the completion of the thirtieth year of his administration. This from the white residents: "Your Excellency's reputation in Native Administration is world-wide and firmly established. What is not so well known outside Papua is the patient, wise and sympathetic manner in which you have worked always for the protection and support of European industries, for the advancement of Papua as a colony, and for the welfare of every member of the community." This from the natives: "When we have come to speak to you, you have not closed your ears, nor have you frowned on us, but have received us and listened to us, and taken action for us. We have seen all the good things you have done and our happiness is great because of you. Therefore we all beg of you not to leave us, but stay here as our Governor for years to come. For we know you and how you have led us into the ways of your laws, treating white people and ourselves just the same. We know that you love us well, and we are full of love for you, our Governor."

B. BLACKWOOD.

Mr. A. L. Tonnoir

By the sudden death, on January 27, of Mr. A. L. Tonnoir, the Australian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has suffered an irreparable loss. This loss is shared by the many entomologists throughout the Commonwealth and overseas who have from time to time benefited by his unusually wide knowledge and experience.

André Leon Tonnoir was born in Brussels in 1885. After his formal education at school and at the University of Liège, he spent several years travelling in England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. During this period he was able to give much of his time to his outstanding interest, entomology, and incidentally to acquire a sound knowledge of six languages. However, it was not until after the War of 1914-18, when he was appointed to the staff of the Brussels Natural History Museum, that he was able to devote his whole time to his former hobby. Like many naturalists, he was especially interested in Australia and New Zealand, and in 1921 he