

## Dr. A. S. Corbet

ALEXANDER STEVEN CORBET was born on August 8, 1896; on May 16, 1948, he collapsed from heart failure after hurrying for a train, and died shortly after. He was educated at Bournemouth and University College, Reading, taking honours in chemistry. Afterwards he took the Ph.D. degree, and in 1935 his D.Sc. in biochemistry. He joined the staff of the British Museum (Natural History) in May 1939, after an already varied career which had included appointments as bacteriologist at the School of Agriculture, Cambridge, bacteriologist and entomologist at the Rubber Research Institute, Kuala Lumpur, F.M.S., soil microbiologist at the I.C.I. Experiment Station, Bracknell, and bacteriological work with the Water Pollution Research Board.

Wide experience, linked with a life-long interest in entomology, resulted, when Corbet was enabled to devote his whole energies to the study of the butterflies of the world, in an approach and a method of treatment such as had not before been applied to these popular insects. A particularly successful example of his work was his treatment of the common and very variable sulphur-yellow butterflies of the genus *Eurema*, which had been a happy hunting ground of the name-coining 'splitters' of earlier days. Another was his revision of the rather intractable species of the 'Blues' of the Oriental genus *Arhopala*. In his work on the latter genus he made use of the parallel variation of a number of species occurring side by side throughout the Malaysian sub-region in a taxonomically novel way; he succeeded in defining the island races of particular species by reference to the general characteristics of each island group, thus eliminating a great deal of rather repetitive descriptive matter. The same parallelism among island species also emerged clearly from his revision

of the species of the genus *Euploea*, a large group of butterflies which also had until then resisted many attempts by more orthodox methods to reduce them to order. In a few years he had, in fact, overcome most of the systematic difficulties which had hitherto dogged the attempts of less gifted students of the systematics of the oriental Rhopalocera. His results are contained in the new edition of his "Butterflies of Malaya", which he has left ready for the press. The collections he formed in Malaya are bequeathed to the nation.

During part of the First World War Corbet served with the Royal Engineers; in the Second World War he was seconded to the Pest Infestation Branch of the Ministry of Food, where he was able, among other things, to carry out research on the taxonomies of insect pests of food which has proved of direct economic value.

Corbet was a prolific writer who had the rare merit of not wasting words. Though his entomological work cannot now be rounded off, the results of his soil research in Malaya have already appeared in highly condensed form in a single slim volume, his "Biological Processes in Tropical Soils". As a colleague he was invaluable, his unassuming modesty cloaking a width of experience and interest, and a personality of great charm. N. D. RILEY

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. Alfred C. Lane, emeritus professor of geology at Tufts College, Massachusetts, president in 1931 of the Geological Society of America, on April 15, aged eighty-five.

Sir D'Arcy Thompson, C.B., professor of natural history in the University of St. Andrews, on June 21, aged eighty-eight.

## NEWS and VIEWS

## Geology at Newcastle-upon-Tyne:

Prof. H. G. A. Hickling, F.R.S.

PROF. H. G. A. HICKLING is to retire at the end of this session from the chair of geology at King's College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which he has held since 1920. During this period he has greatly extended his own work in some of the branches of geology to which he had earlier made contributions, and his students have shown that wide range of interest which is characteristic of him. Already as a lecturer at Manchester he had investigated the Old Red Sandstones of east Scotland, described the footprints of fossil reptiles, examined the variations of gastropods, studied the structure of fossil plants, the microstructure of coals and the stratigraphy of the Lancashire coalfield; the latter topics he made his own at a time when coalfield work was thought by some to be scarcely suitable for academic geologists. At Newcastle he has added much to our knowledge of coals, and especially (by his development of techniques of section cutting) to the understanding of 'vitrain'. He has fittingly combined an active interest in the economic problems of the north of England with a full appreciation of the necessity for less obviously useful studies: all this has been to the advantage of his students. His work was recognized by the award of the Murchison Medal by the Geo-

logical Society in 1934 and by his election to the Royal Society in 1936.

Dr. T. S. Westoll

DR. T. S. WESTOLL, who is succeeding Prof. Hickling in the chair of geology in King's College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, has had a distinguished career in geology and vertebrate palaeontology. Graduating in 1932 in the College to which he now returns, he commenced research on the famous fish fauna of the Permian rocks of that area. He was awarded a Ph.D. and a senior research award of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, with which he proceeded to University College, London, to work with Prof. D. M. S. Watson. During his three years in that position, he visited many of the principal museums in Europe and commenced the work to which he has since contributed most widely, namely, the further study of the Old Red Sandstone and its faunas, particularly in the north of Scotland. In 1937, with grants from the Geological and Royal Societies, he spent several months in the United States and Canada, visiting the principal universities and museums, and commencing stratigraphical and palaeontological field-work in the Gaspé Peninsula, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The latter important work was interrupted by his election to a senior lectureship at Aberdeen, though not before