

## OBITUARIES

## Sir James McNeill, K.C.V.O., C.B.E., F.R.S.

JAMES MCFADYEN MCNEILL, who died on July 24, was born in 1892, at Clydebank, where, in 1870, the establishment of a shipyard and engine works had led to the foundation of a burgh. His schooling was first local, and then in Glasgow at Allan Glen's, a school notable for the opportunity offered to aspirants toward engineering. His father was a foreman in the shipyard of John Brown and Co., and in 1908 James McNeill began an apprenticeship there, and an association which, with only a war-time interruption, was to be continuous. In those days, a technical education was a luxury which had to follow a normal apprenticeship, and it was not until 1912 that James McNeill, with a good knowledge of shipbuilding as a background, matriculated at the University of Glasgow. In 1915 he graduated as B.Sc., the leading student of naval architecture in his group, winner of prizes in engineering and in mathematics as well as in his own specialized subject, and, withal, quiet and unassuming; an indication of another interest was attendance at the class of political economy. Graduation was soon followed by enlistment, with the Royal Artillery as the choice. In the German offensive of early 1918 the conduct of Captain James McNeill as a battery commander gained for him a mention in despatches, a Military Cross, and promotion to field rank.

Back to the shipyard after the War, James McNeill was placed in charge of the design and technical section associated with the ship drawing office. It was fairly soon apparent that in the years of war there had been marked development of latent qualities—acceptance of responsibility and exercise of leadership. The development was recognized when, in 1928, following an unexpected vacancy, the young man was appointed naval architect to the Company, a position carrying responsibility for the preparation of all shipyard plans, from the design stage onwards to completion, and leading in a few years to a seat on the local board of directors. The first major work carried out by James McNeill was the design and completion of the *Empress of Britain*, the largest ship built in Great Britain since the completion of the *Aquitania* in 1914; there had been keen competition for the contract, and there were stringent conditions to be fulfilled. In the launching of this large ship a feature new in Britain was the use of ciné cameras, and the painting of 'register' marks on the hull, in order that a complete and reliable record could be obtained of the travel of the ship down the launching ways and, especially, of the 'plunge' as the fore end of the launching cradle dropped off the end of the ways; the placing of some of the cameras involved some of the technique of the skilled gunner.

The record of the launching of the *Empress of Britain* was valuable in itself. There was, however, special intent behind it. Consideration was already being given to the problem of building and launching a ship about 1,000 ft. long, and the cost of the dredging necessary to permit the launching into a restricted river was a factor to be taken into account. From the records of the launch of the *Empress of Britain* it was found that the dredging need not be so extensive as had been feared. The successful launching of the *Queen Mary* in 1934 was, in a way, a development from the launching of the *Empress of Britain*. There was also, however, much fresh and patient investigation of the whole range of problems involved in what is at once a crude and a highly complicated operation. A comprehensive record of the investigations and of the treatment of the problems was

presented to the Institution of Naval Architects in 1935 in a paper by Mr. McNeill which is a masterpiece.

The patient and perceptive thoroughness which Mr. McNeill had displayed in his first major work for John Brown and Co. was carried on throughout his career in the shipyard. The range of his activity was wide, and although the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* are his masterpieces, he left his mark on lesser-known craft of all types. In 1948 he became managing director of the establishment to which he had come as an apprentice forty years before: and then in 1953 he became deputy chairman of the Company, a position he held until retirement in 1962. A catalogue of honours includes first the honorary degree of LL.D. from the University of Glasgow in 1939, election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1948, Royal appointment as C.B.E. in 1950, and as K.C.V.O. in 1954. Appreciation of colleagues in the shipbuilding and engineering industry was shown by selection for high office in the ancillary organizations of the industry, and in the professional institutions.

In Sir James McNeill there was much more than technical capacity. There was staunch integrity, allied to wisdom and kindness, qualities which won the respect of all who were concerned with ships produced at Clydebank, whether as owners of ships or as officers of Government. With a streak of the puritan in him, he could come down hard on any tendency toward vulgarity in the conversation across the shipyard lunch-table. He could express strong dislike of income tax 'fiddling', and also of bullying of juniors—to him, bullying was the resort of the man who was not up to his job. A. M. ROBB

## Prof. Louis Fage

THE well-known French zoologist, Louis Fage, member of the Académie des Sciences, Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur, died in Dijon on May 28, in his eighty-first year. Formerly professor at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, and at the Institut Océanographique, he was outstanding as investigator, lecturer and administrator. His publications include the volumes on Amphipoda (with Chevreux, 1925) and Cumacea (1951) in the *Faune de France*, and the sections on Merostomata and Pycnogonida in Grassé's *Traité de Zoologie* (1949).

He was born on September 30, 1883, in Limoges (Haut-Vienne), France, son of René Fage, barrister and corresponding member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. He was educated at the Collège St. Martial, Limoges, and entered the University of Paris in 1900, still undecided as to his course of study. It so happened that Gaston Bonnier and Edmond Perrier were old family friends; on their advice he chose the natural sciences and obtained his doctorate in 1906. Forty years later Goodrich referred to his thesis on the segmental organs of polychæte worms as the most important of the general works on nephridia and allied subjects which had appeared since 1895.

For the next fourteen years he served as naturalist to the Service Scientifique des Pêches Maritimes, attached to the Laboratoire Arago, Banyuls, of which Racovitza was the resident deputy director. His work on Mediterranean fishes attracted the attention of the oceanographer, Johannes Schmidt, and led to a life-long association with Danish scientists. He found the local methods of catching pelagic shoaling fishes rudimentary in the extreme and suggested fishing with lights at night. He also used this method extensively for the collection of plankton; this work, started in the Mediterranean,