

Obituary

C. L. BARRETT

Charles Leslie Barrett was born, at Hawthorn, Vic., on June 26, 1879, and died on January 16, 1959. He is survived by a son, Major Donald Barrett, New Guinea, and a daughter, Mrs. D. Campbell of Mentone, Vic. Mrs. Barrett, his helpmate and associate with him in trips to many an outback corner of Australia, died in October 1957—for obituary see *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. 75, p. 89.

In an early nature booklet, *From Range to Sea*, 1907, Charles Barrett acknowledged a debt to Donald Macdonald "who showed me the way". It may be said, without fear of competent contradiction, that Barrett showed the way of nature to a great number—though many will not admit it because he did not write, they say, with scientific exactitude. Well, Barrett did not claim to be a scientific writer, but merely a bush Rambler with an interest in natural things of the wilds—the sights and sounds for him with eyes to see and ears to hear. He wrote pleasantly, if lightly, and if his output and diversity of subject annoyed some critics, it pleased a great number of readers, who understood, because they were at their level, books like *Koonwarra* and *Isle of Mountains* and *Coast of Adventure*.

Barrett joined the *Herald* organization in 1906 and continued on its literary staff for 33 years. Opportunities for country excursions for his paper came more often than is the lot with most journalists. He attended R.A.O.U. camps, he took other opportunities to poke around the bush, and thus he became familiar with much of this sunlit land of ours. These journeyings were reflected in his newspaper paragraphs and articles and in his books such as *In Australian Wilds*, 1919. This contains an account of the 'woodlanders' venture in a bush hut at Olinda Vale which Barrett, Brooke Nicholls and Claude Kinane made a centre for rambling, observing and photographing, living at week-ends a simple life on a fancied pattern with Thoreau, though without that author's 'eternal economies'.

Barrett saw service with the Australian Camel Field Ambulance in Egypt and in Palestine during the first world war. In this association he edited a magazine for Australian and New Zealand troops and was co-editor of *Australia in Palestine*. Further publications connected with his newspaper work were *Pals*, published from 1920-1928 (other books for boys had appeared in the early 1900's), and the dozen *Sun Nature Books* (cheap, yet attractive 'introducers' of nature subjects). He was co-author, with Croll, of *Art of the Australian Aboriginal*, and, with Burns, of *Butterflies of Australia and New Guinea*. This account of his writings is not intended as comprehensive but should not be closed with-

out reference to the Australian Children's Encyclopædia, a 2-volume work of 1056 pages with popular accounts by a number of experts in their respective fields.

Coming closer to ourselves—to his contacts with the R.A.O.U. and the like—Charles Barrett was a foundation (1901) member and remained associated most of the years thereafter. For a short time (1910 to 1916) he assisted Leach with the editing of *The Emu*. He served as editor of *The Victorian Naturalist* from May 1925 to August 1939. He took a leading part in the formation of the Bird Observers Club in 1905. He was a corresponding member of the Zoological Societies of London and of New York.

Charles Barrett was a quiet and reserved man, not unfriendly but largely concerned with his family, his books—he had a fine library of Australiana and writings on the Pacific which latter is to go to the National Library, Canberra—and his own interests and concerns. He did not seek to be a clubman, a man of the world, a good mixer, a 'go-getter'—but, after all, many people prefer men like that.
—C.E.B.

Correspondence

PLUMAGE OF PARROTS

To the Editor

Sir,—Erhard F. Boehm in 'Parrots and Cockatoos of the Mount Mary Plains, South Australia' (*Emu*, vol. 59, p. 83) contradicts the accuracy of my published statements that adult plumage is attained by the Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus adalaidae*) at about the age of fifteen months and by the Ringneck Parrot (*Barnardius barnardi*) between twelve and eighteen months of age. The statements to which he refers are the result of carefully-recorded observations of numbers of birds of both species bred in captivity in my own private collection and in the Adelaide Zoological Gardens.

In order to substantiate his opinion that, in the case of the Adelaide Rosella, certain plumage changes "of fine old birds do not appear to be attained until at least the third year and possibly only in the fourth year of life" and in the case of the Ringneck Parrot that certain features of the plumage "of fine old individuals are certainly not acquired until the third, and possibly not until the fourth year of life", Boehm would need to have banded many nestlings of both species and to have collected them at varying times thereafter. If he has done so, his figures in regard to numbers banded, total number of specimens collected and number of recoveries would make interesting reading; but until he is able to publish such records, his statements in regard