

THE LATE GUNNER M. C. THOMPSON, R.A.O.U.

GENERAL and sincere regret will be felt by all members of the R.A.O.U. at the loss of a young and promising naturalist, Maurice Charles Thompson, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Thompson, of "Pambula," Moreland. Gunner Thompson fell in France on 29th April last, and, as heroes do, facing the foe on the Lys River, where the British, fighting hard, thrust the horrible Huns back apace.

The late gallant gunner, who was formerly in the Auditor of Receipts Office, Victorian Railways, was only 25 years of age, was born at Ascot Vale (Vic.), and was educated at the Moreland State school. He enlisted July, 1915, and was in the thick of the fighting for over two years in France. He will be remembered amongst members for his well-nigh faultless and lovable disposition. As a bird-lover and in the field he lived near to Nature's own great heart, and consequently was a keen observer. On service he was very fond of reading *The Emu*, and, when digested, he always returned his copy home for safe keeping. The following extract of stern duty and bird-observing is taken from a letter of Gunner Thompson's, written to a fellow-member, Mr. A. C. Stone, under date France, 24/4/17:—

"We had some interesting though strenuous times lately following Fritz through and far beyond Bapaume. The most exciting time (which has since been well described in the papers) was one morning, when I had an unpleasant awakening. Just before dawn a chap came running past our dug-outs with the pleasant news that Fritz was advancing in force just over the rise. We were soon told to retire to the next village, as our infantry was falling back. The breech-blocks, &c., were removed from the guns, as the latter could not be used under the circumstances. Machine gun and rifle bullets were pretty thick, and the shells were falling in the fields, but not so thickly. At first I thought I would soon be mending Fritz's roads. It was something new for us. Finally, as you now know, Fritz got a terrible mauling.

"The weather to-day is glorious. What a wonderful difference it makes to us! It is good to be alive. The Larks are singing beautifully, and to-day I saw the first Swallow this season. The Magpies (*Pica pica*) are building in a small wood not many miles from here. I saw about one hundred of these birds one evening. The Partridges are going about in pairs now. There are a fair number of what I take to be Linnets, and a few tiny Hawks which somewhat resemble our Kestrel in habits. The only other 'birds' that are at all common hereabouts are aeroplanes, of many different species. It must be the 'mating season' for them too, as I often see them fighting fiercely."