

Obituaries

J. A. KERSHAW

An earlier generation of ornithologists, particularly, will recall James Andrew Kershaw as an active worker in Australian zoology. Fifteen years have passed since he retired from the post of Director of the National Museum, Melbourne, where he had been employed continuously since he was a lad of sixteen—and where his father, before him, had occupied the post of Zoologist from 1856, two years after the Museum was founded. It is with regret that we record his death, on February 16, within a few months of his 80th birthday.

Mr. Kershaw joined the Museum staff in 1883 under Sir Frederick McCoy. On the death of McCoy he became Curator of the Museum under the directorship of Sir Baldwin Spencer, and on Spencer's retirement in 1929 he succeeded to the post of Director. He retired in 1931, and was appointed to the honorary scientific staff of the institution.

In his earlier days he was a keen collaborator with the Union, and was a member of the party on its famous Bass Straits excursion in 1908-9. Early issues of *The Emu* contain some of his notes, though he published no extensive ornithological papers in the journal. He was a friend of the late H. L. White, and that friendship, and White's confidence in his administration and curatorship, were factors that secured the presentation of the H. L. White collection to the National Museum.

Mr. Kershaw was very active in a number of societies other than the R.A.O.U. He had been a member of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria since 1888, though he had attended some of its meetings as early as 1883, and was a member of its committee for more than 30 years, including two terms as president (1913-15, 1931-33) and two as secretary (1901-3, 1906-8). He was also president of the Royal Society of Victoria (1918-19) and a member of the council for many years, and vice-president of the Zoological Section of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science in 1934.

Perhaps his principal activity, however, was in the movement which succeeded, in 1908, in having Wilson's Promontory set aside as a sanctuary and national park, and he was secretary of the committee of management of the park from its inception until his death.

He leaves three sons: his wife predeceased him.—P.C.M.

D. M. TOWNLEY

Sergeant Dudley M. Townley, who was killed in action on March 20, 1945, at Aitape, New Guinea, was born on September 4, 1914, at Lismore, N.S.W. After leaving the

Lismore High School at the age of 17, he entered the business of Messrs. D. Townley & Sons, where he remained until he enlisted in March 1942. He became an instructor in a machine-gun section. For thirteen months during 1943-44 he was in Dutch New Guinea, where he compiled some notes on the birds of Merauke, and after four months in Australia in 1944 was sent to Aitape in November. He had been promoted to sergeant a couple of weeks before his death. He was deeply interested in natural history, especially birds. He discovered a new species of native bee which Mr. Tarlton Rayment named in his honour.—D.J.D.

FRANK M. CHAPMAN

First news of the death of Frank M. Chapman appears in the *Wilson Bulletin*, vol. 57, no. 4, Dec. 1945, at p. 264, and this note is culled from the account therein. Chapman died in New York City on November 15, 1945, at the age of 81. He was Curator in the American Museum of Natural History from 1888 to 1942. He was Associate Editor of *The Auk* from 1895 to 1911, and founded *Bird Lore* (now *Audubon Magazine*), which he edited from 1899 to 1934. A man of great versatility, energy and powers of concentration, he became an acknowledged leader in such diverse fields as editing, wild-life conservation, museum exhibits, popularization of bird study, bird photography, zoogeography, and taxonomy. His sixteen books and scores of articles and shorter contributions—his *Camps and Cruises of an Ornithologist* and *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover* being of especial interest—brought not only a world-wide reputation among bird students but also recognition for himself and for the whole field of ornithology by the general public.—K.A.H.

Reviews

Bird Conservation Problems.—Dr. Ernst Mayr, in the *Audubon Magazine* for Sept.-Oct. 1945, p. 279, deals with conservation problems in the south-west Pacific, where more kinds of birds have become extinct than in all the rest of the world together, and where the extermination process is probably but beginning. He instances the rails. Excepting a few widespread forms, all rails are restricted to small island groups. Of fourteen in such category eleven have become extinct during a century: this includes the Laysan Rail—see next review item. These cases of destruction of a species on a small island amount, consequently, to *world* extinction.

A species of fixed environmental status is incapable of speedy adaptation and goes down before interferences with habitat, new enemies and changed conditions. Lord Howe Island is mentioned, but many other islands have come recently into the danger zones. The author demands prevention of needless destruction, for whilst war necessitated great damage, the aftermath is often born of thoughtfulness or foolishness and is totally unnecessary. America has assumed a large part in the administration of islands possessing