

Henry Fairfield Osborn.

THE sudden death on November 6, 1935, of Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn at his home, Garrison-on-Hudson, N.Y., removed a striking figure and a distinguished investigator, who had been a frequent visitor to this country, and a welcome and greatly valued friend of many British zoologists and palæontologists.

He was born at Fairfield, Conn., on August 8, 1857, and was educated at Princeton, where his interest in palæontology was aroused. In 1879-80 he came to England for further study. He delighted to recall his studies during those years in embryology under Balfour in Cambridge, and in comparative anatomy under Huxley in London, and his friendship with the long line of zoologists who succeeded them, for he had known every one of note in his own lines of work.

This is not the place to write in any detail of his distinguished services as Professor of Comparative Anatomy in Princeton (1883-90), as Professor of Zoology in Columbia University (1891-1910), and of his important field-work in palæontology in the Western United States, in the Fayum, and in Mongolia. The great monument to his energy, resource, and judgment is the immense development under his direction of the scientific work and the great extension of the buildings of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, which not only contains fine series of specimens well exhibited, and extensive collections of reference material of prime importance in several lines, but is a vigorous centre of research. Osborn was the founder and Curator of the Department of Vertebrate Palæontology in the Museum, and as President of the Museum from 1908 until his retirement to the post of Honorary President in 1933 he directed its policy with consummate skill, while also devoting himself assiduously to research in mammalian palæontology. For more than forty years important papers have issued from these studies, and with collaborators he also published the well-known memoirs on the Equidæ (1918) and on the Titanotheres (two volumes, 1929). Among his other works reference may be made to *The Evolution of Mammalian Molar Teeth* (1907), *The Age of Mammals* (1910), and his *Impressions of Great Naturalists* (1924, 1928), the last of which includes many interesting personal reminiscences.

Osborn's broad outlook and sound judgment brought him into important councils when new projects or difficult problems were to be

considered. For instance, he played an influential part in combating the extreme fundamentalism which had so remarkable a manifestation in certain parts of the United States some ten years ago.

He was a prolific writer, and was the author or joint author of 940 articles, papers, books, and memoirs. The value of his work in palæontology was recognised by many universities and learned societies in America and in Europe. He was elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Society of London in 1926; he had previously (in 1918) been awarded a Darwin Medal. He was elected an Honorary Fellow of this Society in 1908.

Osborn came to Scotland for a good part of August 1935, and after a short tour in the west went to Thurso, where he spent a week with Mr C. Forster Cooper and his fellow-workers from Cambridge, who were collecting an extensive series of Devonian fishes. This was the last of Osborn's many experiences of field-work in palæontology. After that, a round of golf at St Andrews—which he had long desired—and two days in Edinburgh, parts of both of which were spent with the writer, completed his visit to Scotland. He expressed his delight in the Scottish scenery and his appreciation of the people of the countryside. He was alert in mind and interested in the development of zoology in this country and in some general matters of scientific education, and his visit has left an abiding impression of his fine personality, his wide outlook, and his knowledge of affairs.

His friends in America and in this country will long bear in memory his genial friendship and his high services to science.

See also *Obituary Notices of the Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol. ii, No. 5, 1936.

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