

OBITUARIES

FRANKLIN BENNER was an original member of the American Ornithologists' Union. He was elected to Associate Membership in 1883 with a group of 19 Active and 40 Associate Members admitted the year following the founding of the Union. He was at that time thirty years of age and had been actively interested in birds since early boyhood. The record seems to show that his membership terminated between 1895 and 1901.

Franklin Benner was born at Astoria, Long Island, New York, on November 13, 1853, and died at Minneapolis, Minnesota, on April 13, 1938. He was the son of Robert and Mary Van Antwerp Benner. After attending the Anthony Grammar School, New York City, he entered Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, and was graduated in 1872. He was a special student at Yale University 1872-73. The summer of 1873 was spent with the U. S. Fish Commission on the Maine coast. He visited Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the summer of 1874 and in 1879 returned to that city where he lived until his death. On June 18, 1884, he married Miss Katherine Skiles of Minneapolis. They had three daughters, Mary, Dorothy, and Katherine, who with his wife survive him.

An interesting chapter in the early New York life of Benner is that he with Ernest Ingersoll issued the call that resulted in the formation of the present New York Linnaean Society. A book containing, in Benner's handwriting, the original constitution and by-laws of the society and a transcript (?) of the minutes of the first year is in the possession of Benner's daughter Dorothy. This book has been loaned to the writer for use in this connection and it may be of historical interest to quote the minutes of the first meeting.

"Pursuant to a call signed by Franklin Benner and Ernest Ingersoll several gentlemen, residents of New York City and vicinity, gathered at the office of Robert Benner, Esquire, No. 55 Liberty Street, New York City, on March 7, 1878, at 7.30 p. m. to take steps toward the formation of a local society of natural history. The names of those present were as follows: H. B. Bailey of New York City, Franklin Benner of Astoria, L. I., E. P. Bicknell of Riverdale, N. Y., John Burroughs of Esopus-on-Hudson, N. Y., Harold Herrick of Orange, N. J., F. H. Hoadly of New York City, Ernest Ingersoll of Jersey City, N. J., Newbold T. Lawrence of New York City, C. Hart Merriam of New York and Wm. C. Osborne of New York. F. Benner was made chairman and the assembly proceeded to the election of permanent officers, the ballots resulting in the choice of C. Hart Merriam, President, Harold Herrick, Vice President, Ernest Ingersoll, Recording Secretary, and H. B. Bailey, Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer.

"Messrs. Bailey, Ingersoll and Lawrence were appointed a committee by the president to draft a constitution and by-laws for the government of the society, which after full discussion was decided to be called 'The Linnaean Society of New York City'."

After March 23, 1878, the meetings were held at the residence of Mr. N. T. Lawrence, 45 East 29th Street. On November 2, 1878, Mr. Ingersoll resigned as secretary and Mr. Benner was elected in his place. The minutes as here recorded for 1878 and early 1879 contain the names of most of the men prominent in ornithology at that time and since, and there is much in regard to the discussions that took place at the meetings. Portions of these records are especially interesting as revealing the experiences and early views of leading ornithologists of that day. John Burroughs was

lected a Corresponding Member on March 16, 1878, George N. Lawrence an Honorary Member April 13, 1878, and Theodore Roosevelt a Corresponding Member January 11, 1879. T. R.'s address was given as 16 Winthrop Place, Boston.

When Benner visited Minneapolis in the summer of 1874, he devoted the time to collecting birds, birds' eggs and plants. The writer of this article, then a lad of sixteen, had been experimenting in making birdskins with poor success. Hearing of the presence of a visitor in the city collecting birds, he sought him out and found Benner busily at work at a bench in a carriage house. A cordial reception was followed by a demonstration of the technique of making up birdskins. Benner was an expert and rapid workman and willingly imparted his knowledge to an interested boy. Benner was also a good field man and much of the time that summer was spent in his company exploring the woods and waters about what was then little more than an expanding village. Then and there began a close friendship which lasted until Benner's death. The material taken that summer and all the rest of Benner's collection of birds and eggs were later donated by him to the University of Minnesota and may now be found in the study collections of the Museum of Natural History.

On Benner's return to Minneapolis in 1879, he and the writer made a collecting trip to the extreme western prairie part of Minnesota and were rewarded with a number of interesting discoveries that added materially to the ornithology of the State. An article (under joint authorship but largely prepared by Benner) descriptive of the results of the trip was published in the 'Bulletin' of the Nuttall Ornithological Club for January 1880. Benner published several other articles on birds in 'Forest and Stream,' 'The Country,' and the 'Bulletin' of the Minnesota Academy of Sciences (for 1887-89). In early life he cherished a desire to write and in several non-scientific articles that he prepared he showed facility in both composition and expression but after becoming engrossed in business this interest waned and during the latter half of his life, though he maintained a reminiscent interest in ornithology and literary matters, he never engaged in any work along such lines. This was unfortunate for he had a keen, well-informed mind, had a knowledge of several modern languages, and he might have gone far had he not allowed a rather varied business career entirely to submerge all else.—THOS. S. ROBERTS.

FERDINAND SCHUYLER MATHEWS, an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1917, died in Plymouth, New Hampshire, August 20, 1938, at the age of eighty-four. He was born in New Brighton, on Staten Island, New York, May 30, 1854, graduated from Cooper Institute in 1873, and later in Italy in 1887. During the decade from 1880 to 1890 he was associated with L. Prang & Co. of Boston and later with the Gray Herbarium of Harvard University.

While with Prang & Co. he prepared and illustrated a series of popular books on flowers and trees which were published by D. Appleton & Co. Among his best known publications were 'Familiar Flowers of Field and Garden,' 'Field Book of American Wild Flowers,' both of which were issued in several editions, and 'Familiar Trees and their Leaves,' 1901 and 1911. In 1904 appeared his principal ornithological work 'Familiar Birds and their Songs' and in 1921 'The Book of Birds for Young People.' His chief interest in ornithology seems to have been popular bird study. Bird songs particularly attracted him and he is generally known as an authority on bird music.

By his work as an artist and author Mathews gained a place in the small group of writers who did so much to foster popular interest in nature study forty years ago when that subject was beginning to attract attention.—T. S. PALMER.

EDMUND PLATT, an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1917, died of heart disease, August 27, 1939, at Chazy, New York. Born in Poughkeepsie, New York, February 2, 1865, the son of John I. and Sarah Frances (Sherwood) Platt, he was well along in his seventy-fifth year at the time of his death.

After graduating from Harvard University in the class of 1888 and from the Eastman Business College of Poughkeepsie, he taught history and English for two years at the Riverview Military Academy, New York, and then spent a year in Superior, Wisconsin, as editorial writer on the 'Evening Telegram.' Upon his return to Poughkeepsie he entered upon a forty-year association with the 'Poughkeepsie Eagle' and in 1892 married Miss Adele Innes. At the election in 1912 he was chosen as the Representative of the 26th New York District. Entering Congress on March 4, 1913, the day the Migratory Bird Law was approved, he served during the seven eventful years which included the contest over the enforcement of the Migratory Bird Law and the enactment of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Before his retirement from Congress he had become chairman of the important Banking Committee and, through his knowledge of birds and conservation, the spokesman on the floor of the House on all measures dealing with conservation of wildlife. During the consideration of the Agricultural Appropriation Bill in the House on April 13, 1916, he delivered a notable speech on the migration of birds and the work of the Biological Survey in protecting game reservations. On June 7, 1920, he resigned to accept an appointment on the Federal Reserve Board, served as Vice-governor of the Board for ten years and then retired to become Vice-president of the Marine Midland Corporation.

During his residence in Washington he maintained an active interest in bird work both in and out of Congress. He possessed a good practical knowledge of birds in the field, was an enthusiastic and accurate observer and particularly interested in the migration of shorebirds and waterfowl. He took an important part in the work of the local Audubon Society, served as its Vice-president and assisted actively in its field work.

Most of Mr. Platt's writings naturally were on subjects dealing with legislation and finance and he seems to have published little or nothing on birds over his own name but freely contributed his observations to others. Earnest, quiet and affable, a true gentleman in every sense of the word, Edmund Platt made friends readily and wielded considerable influence in the circles in which he moved. His interest in birds served not only as a diversion from the ordinary routine of daily life but furnished an outstanding example of the important contributions to ornithology which may be made by a man even when engrossed in the duties incident to an active business career.—T. S. PALMER.

REYNOLD JOCELYN ONSLOW BRAY was born October 5, 1911, at Ockham, near Ripley, Surrey, England. He was educated at Harrow (1925-30), Balliol College, Oxford University (1930-32), and at Wye Agricultural College (1932). He was married in March 1934, to Gillian Margaret Warren Butler. A daughter was born to them on August 10, 1938. Notice was cabled to Bray at Churchill where he was waiting to embark upon what proved to be his last expedition. At his request the child was named Handa, after a bird island off the northwest coast of Scotland that he and Mrs. Bray had visited the previous May.

Bray was on the Oxford University Exploration Club's expedition to Akpatok Island in Ungava Bay, Hudson Strait, in 1931. This expedition, on which Bray was nominally photographer, made a complete survey of this little-known island. The

story was told in 'The Isle of Auks,' by N. Polunin, 1932. In 1932-33, Bray, with T. H. Manning, made a winter tramp through Swedish, Finnish, and Russian Lapland, from Bodo to Murmansk. He wrote up this fascinating journey, which included trouble on the Soviet frontier, in 'Five Watersheds,' published in January 1935. He then studied Russian and took the War Office interpreters' course at London University, and visited Russia from June to October 1935. Again with Manning, he took part as an ornithologist in the British Canadian Arctic Expedition, March 1936-October 1937, to Southampton Island and Melville Peninsula. Much of the eastern shores of those lands was mapped as well as the unknown coast of Baffin Island on the east of Foxe Basin.

In 1938, Bray planned with P. D. Baird to go to Igloodik in northern Foxe Basin for a two-years' stay, expecting to travel as far as Pond's Inlet and to work out a key locality important in arctic ornithology. Due to bad ice conditions, the R. C. missionary supply ship 'Teresa,' upon which they embarked at Churchill, was unable to get through to Foxe Basin, so Bray and Baird left the vessel at Winter Island off the east coast of Melville Peninsula to make their way three hundred miles north in a whale-boat. On September 14, the thirteenth day of their boat journey and when they were within forty miles of Igloodik, engine trouble and heavy seas decided them to land. Baird was on shore when the anchor apparently dragged, and Bray could not make any progress by poling. He then tried to bring a line ashore in a folding canvas boat and was blown out to sea. Baird made every effort to save him by sailing the whale-boat but to no avail. The frail craft with Bray in it was soon lost to sight. A cairn was erected including a soapstone slab on which legends in English and Eskimo were carved. The Eskimo part reads: "Um li gar juk died here. Let us not forget him."

The taste for arctic exploration, like a strong fever, seems regrettably often to end only in death. Long is the roll of those who have perished exploring the most inhospitable of earth's climes and not least among them was Bray. Quiet, almost reticent, he could at need speak or write most clearly and effectively. For his years he was indeed broadly experienced and deeply educated. He had a fine sense of humor and a sound all around humanity.—W. L. McATEE.