

AUSTIN GEOFFREY LEIGH.

WARWICKSHIRE ornithology has sustained a very serious loss by the death of this young and ardent worker, who was killed in action in France on June 4th, 1916.

The third and youngest son of Mr. George L. Leigh, he lived practically the whole of his life at Hampton-in-Arden, Warwickshire, where he was born on July 20th, 1893. He was very early in life attracted by the bird-life around him and began making observations and collecting eggs. By the time he reached his eighteenth year this predilection had become a passion, and he conceived the idea of producing a history of the birds of Warwickshire. From that time, till he joined the Army towards the close of 1914, the greater part of his leisure was employed in collecting material for what he intended should be the great work of his life. He had already accumulated a considerable amount of matter, but had no intention of publishing for some years to come, for though such a work as he contemplated must necessarily be to a large extent a compilation, yet he wished it to be as far as possible a record of his personal experience and observation.

Soon after the war broke out Leigh enlisted as a private in the 2nd City (Birmingham) Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and at once threw himself into his military duties with the zest that characterised him in everything he did, quickly becoming an expert rifle-shot and getting his stripe as lance-corporal. This unfortunately put a stop to his systematic ornithological work, but he continued to make notes on birds whenever opportunity offered, and as for some months he was still in his native county of Warwickshire, training at Sutton Coldfield, he added to his store of information, finding for instance two nests of the Stonechat, thus establishing the fact within his own experience and much to his satisfaction that this bird is a Warwickshire breeder, statements on the subject by other authors being of too general a character to satisfy his very exact mind.

From time to time he contributed notes to *British Birds*, amongst which may be mentioned one on "The Development of a Young Kestrel" (Vol. IV., page 298), and those on the occurrence of the White-winged Black Tern (Vol. III., page 168) and Long-tailed Duck (Vol. VII., page 199) in Warwickshire; but what he especially plumed himself upon was his discovery of the Redshank as a regular breeder at Hampton and Packington. This was the subject of his first contribution (Vol. II., page 33). He was eminently a practical field-ornithologist, with a power of vision and an alertness of mind that enabled him to note at a glance the most striking visible features of any bird he saw; he had an excellent ear and a good knowledge of bird-notes. Another most useful accomplishment he had was the faculty of making accurate rough sketches in the field; in fact, though he had no special training, he was the son of an artist and inherited in no inconsiderable degree the artistic talent and temperament of his father.

From its inauguration Leigh took a great interest in the *British Birds* ringing scheme, and expected that in time great results would accrue from it. He himself ringed large numbers of birds in his district and was highly pleased when any of them were subsequently taken at places which seemed likely to throw light on migration, and he had several notable successes in this direction.

Personally, he was one of those clean-souled men whom to know is to love. Fearless, upright, totally devoid of self-consciousness or conceit, he said and wrote nothing but what he believed to be absolutely true, without any regard to effect. Dubious or speculative statements on ornithological matters were ridiculed in no uncertain terms, he being of opinion that such were injurious to his beloved science, and he would have none of them.

T. GROUND.