

JOHN ALEXANDER HARVIE-BROWN.

(PLATE 1.)

THE death of Dr. Harvie-Brown will cause a vacancy in the ranks of Scottish naturalists which it will be difficult, if not impossible to fill. Few Scotsmen knew their native land better than he, and none have ever before acquired such an extensive knowledge of its Vertebrate Fauna.

John Alexander Harvie-Brown was born on August 27th, 1844. He was the only son of John Harvie-Brown, of Quarter and Shirgarton, who assumed the name Brown by the will of John Brown of Quarter, and Elizabeth Spottiswoode, his wife, the daughter and heiress of Thomas Spottiswoode of Dunipace. He was educated at Merchiston Castle, and Edinburgh and Cambridge Universities. As a youth he was a good football and cricket player, but from his earliest days he was most remarkable for his enthusiasm in collecting birds and birds' eggs, and he used to delight in telling how a light-house keeper had happily interpreted his initials as "John Always Hunting Birds." He never married and never followed a profession, but devoted his life to natural history and he was also fond of shooting and fishing. As a comparatively young man he made several ornithological visits to Norway, Russia, Finland and Transylvania, and perhaps his most important expedition was that to the lower reaches of the River Petchora with Henry Seebohm in the summer of 1875, when, amongst other achievements, the eggs of the Grey Plover and the Little Stint were discovered. He had a unique knowledge of the islands off the Scottish coast, as for some years he made it a practice each summer to cruise among them in his yacht the "Shiantelle." The Hebrides, Orkneys, Shetlands, and the Faroes were all explored by him in this way, and even lonely Rockall was visited in the Irish Fisheries'

steamer. During all these years he was amassing a magnificent collection of eggs and birds' skins, which was the result of the joint efforts of himself and his friend H. W. Feilden, who, being in the Army, and therefore constantly on the move, was only too glad that it might be housed at Dunipace. A fire, however, in January 1897, almost totally destroyed their collection, which may well be regarded as unreplaceable. With advancing years he grew less and less active and gradually settled down to a stay-at-home life as laird of Dunipace. For a number of years he was chairman of Dunipace School Board and was also a member of its Parish Council.

Until two or three years ago he was still able to enjoy a certain amount of shooting and fishing, but his stoutness increased to a veritable infirmity (shortly before his death he weighed as much as twenty-seven stone) and latterly he was scarcely able to leave his armchair. His mind, however, remained active and he was a great talker, possessing a fund of anecdote, while to the end he delighted in carrying on a voluminous correspondence with anyone who was interested in ornithology. He was the staunchest of Tories, and he resented any innovation, either in politics or in ornithological nomenclature, as keenly as did his old Cambridge friend Alfred Newton.

His death was not apprehended; he had been unwell for a few days but had been pronounced decidedly better, so that he passed away unexpectedly at 10.30 a.m. on July 26th, 1916. Three days later he was buried in Dunipace Old Cemetery, which stands between the two hills (Duni pacis, the Knolles of Peace, as they have been termed) right in front of the house which had for so many years been his happy and busy home.

A list of Harvie-Brown's published writings is given in the Royal Society's Catalogue of scientific publications, and a bibliography of his works was privately printed [N.D.] in one vol., 4to, pp. 34. In Messrs. Mullens and Kirke-Swan's recently published *Bibliography of British*

Ornithology some eighty-two items are credited to him. Altogether, his contributions to scientific literature amount to close on 250, if we include articles in periodicals such as *The Zoologist* (in which his first note appeared in 1862), *The Proceedings of the Physical Society of Edinburgh*, *The Transactions of the Natural History Society of Glasgow*, *The Ibis*, etc. in addition to his books. Of these latter, his series of volumes on the *Vertebrate Fauna* of certain areas in Scotland are perhaps the most monumental, and though in several of these he was assisted by his friend T. E. Buckley, and later by others, it must be remembered that he was the originator and mainstay of this series of publications. His *Capercaillie in Scotland* is the standard work on the subject and is very typical of the author's style and erudition. With John Cordeaux he shares the credit of initiating the enquiry undertaken in 1879 by a committee of which he was a member, representing the east coast of Scotland, of the British Association to investigate the phenomena of bird migration as observed at lighthouses and light-ships. He was also the founder, owner, and joint editor of *The Annals of Scottish Natural History* till it became *The Scottish Naturalist*, when he eagerly lent this new publication his best services. The results of his ornithological experiences on the Continent were duly chronicled in the *Ibis*, and he published, in 1905, his *Travels of a Naturalist in Northern Europe*. His systematic use of [square brackets] for doubtful records cannot be claimed as an innovation, but their use certainly forms a characteristic feature of his *Vertebrate Faunas*; he was tremendously keen on the utility and significance of these symbols, and his constant practice as to their use might well be universally adopted as a recognized custom.

Harvie-Brown was a Justice of the Peace for Stirlingshire, he was also a Fellow of the Zoological Societies of London and of Scotland, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, one of the oldest Members (at the time of his death) of the British Ornithologists' Union, and

he regarded it as a great compliment that he should have been elected an Honorary Life Member of the American Ornithologists' Union. In 1912, the University of Aberdeen, in recognition of his services to Natural History, particularly as regards Scotland, conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D.

It is satisfactory to know that he bequeathed to the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, his splendid collection of books, pamphlets and manuscripts relating to Natural History and to the Topography of Scotland, as well as the remnant of his natural history specimens which escaped the disastrous fire of 1897 and such specimens as he had since acquired. It is far better that such a magnificent library should not be dispersed under the auctioneer's hammer, but should be handed over to the National Museum, where it will be available for the use of students for all time and will for ever keep alive the memory of one of Scotland's most distinguished naturalists.

H.S.G.



J A Hawke Brown

Born August 27th, 1844. Died July 26th, 1916.