

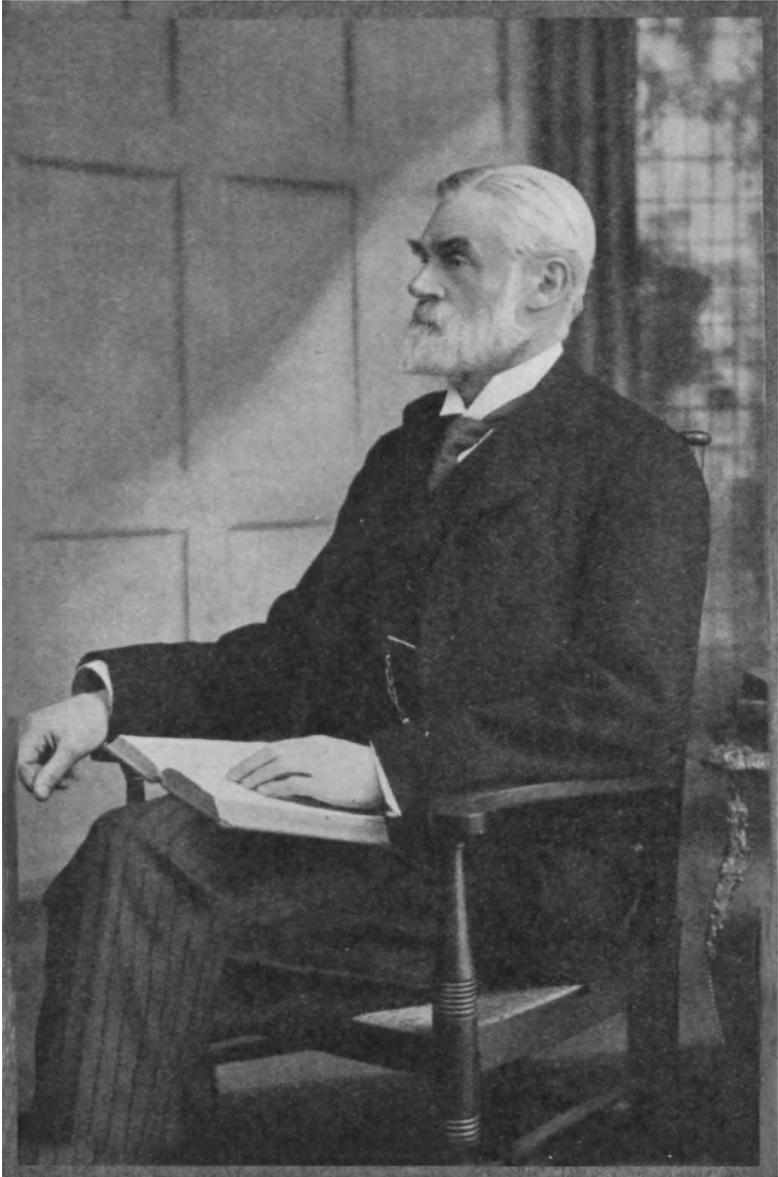
OBITUARY.

JOHN HENRY GURNEY.

“ THE old order changeth, yielding place to new,” and slowly but surely those who may be styled as belonging to the old school of ornithologists are dying out. Having been privileged to know not a few of these older naturalists, I may perhaps be allowed to say that I have always been struck by their never failing courtesy and helpfulness as compared with the somewhat combative criticism of the younger generation. Possibly this opinion may be due to the veneration of youth for age but, be this as it may, it will be agreed on all hands that the outstanding characteristics of the late John Henry Gurney were his humility and his kindness.

John Henry Gurney came of a family which has been prominent for many generations in the public life of Norfolk where the Gurneys have long been noted for their philanthropy and integrity. His father [John Henry, *b.* 1819, *d.* 1890] represented Lynn in Parliament in 1857 and 1859, and although recognized as a man of affairs was best known as an ornithologist: in his day he stood pre-eminent in his knowledge of the Accipitres and Striges and his collection of the Birds of Prey, now in the Norwich Castle Museum, was for a long time the finest out of London. John Henry the younger may be said to have been born an ornithologist; his father, as may well be supposed, having made him familiar with birds, both living and dead, from his infancy. He was born at Easton Lodge, near Norwich, on 31st July, 1848, and was educated at Harrow School. For a short time he was in Messrs. Backhouse's bank at Darlington, but the greater part of his life was spent in Norfolk where he ably fulfilled his duties as a large landowner and country gentleman and, as such, took a prominent part in local, religious and philanthropic work. At the time of his death he was a Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Lieutenant for Norfolk, of which county he was High Sheriff in 1894. He is survived by his wife, three daughters and a son who, it is most interesting to note, carries on the scientific traditions of his forefathers, since he is well known as an aviculturist and lepidopterist.

As an ornithologist J. H. Gurney has been said to have had an international reputation. He was elected a Fellow of the Zoological Society in 1868, a Member of the British Ornithologists' Union in 1870 and a Fellow of the Linnean Society in 1885. His first contribution to ornithology,



Mauli & Fox, Phot.]

J. H. Gurney

Born July 31st, 1848.

Died November 8th, 1922.

“Variety of the Swallow,” appeared in *The Ibis* of 1866,* and since that date not a year passed without some important contribution from his pen to the science which he loved and served so well. In 1918 he had printed a list of his articles dealing with ornithology† and this gives a total of 127 separate items; this total, however, seems inadequate when compared with the list of his publications given in Messrs. Mullens and Kirke Swann’s *Bibliography of British Ornithology*‡ and it must also be remembered that in any case this total has to be augmented not only by his publications since 1918, but also by his contributions to many periodicals which can hardly be regarded as having a scientific status. Of his publications the most important is undoubtedly *The Gannet, a bird with a history*,§ and he admitted a partiality for the Gannet ever since his first visit to Ailsa Craig in 1871; his keenness on all that related to this bird was remarkable and, though it can hardly be said to have amounted to a fetish, it led him to incorporate a Gannet in his book-plate of which a reproduction is given on page 243. His *Rambles of a Naturalist in Egypt and other countries*,|| published in 1876, provides a record of some of his earlier travels and in 1884 he contributed “A Catalogue of the Birds of Norfolk” to Mason’s *History of Norfolk*.¶ In 1885, with Col. C. Russell and Dr. Elliott Coues, he published *The House Sparrow*** and two years later he issued a pamphlet “*The Misdeeds of the Sparrow*”†† dealing with the same subject. His *Catalogue of a collection of British Birds*‡‡ published in 1892, gives the localities, sex

* *The Ibis*, Vol. II. (1866), p. 423.

† *Articles on Ornithology and Ornithological Reports for the County of Norfolk* by J. H. G. Pamphlet 8vo, 1918, pp. 8. Printed by Messrs. Taylor and Francis.

‡ 1917, pp. 260-264.

§ *The Gannet, a bird with a history*, 1 vol., 8vo, pp. li+567. Published by Witherby & Co., 1913.

|| *Rambles of a Naturalist in Egypt and other countries* 1 vol., 8vo, pp. vi+307. Published by Jarrold & Sons, 1876.

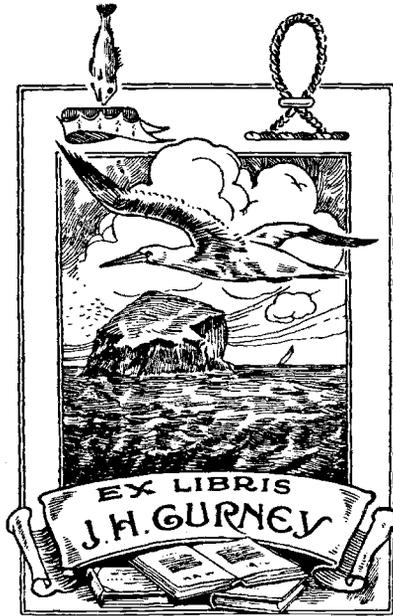
¶ This catalogue was reprinted separately, 1 vol., 8vo, p. 47. Printed by Messrs. Wertheimer, Lea & Co., 1884. 5 pp. “additions and corrections” thereto were issued in December, 1885.

** *The House Sparrow*, 1 vol., post 8vo, pp. vi+70. Published by Messrs. William Wesley & Son. [1885.]

†† *The Misdeeds of the Sparrow*, pamphlet, post 8vo, pp. 9. Published by Messrs. Gurney & Jackson, 1887.

‡‡ *Catalogue of a collection of British Birds*, 1 vol. 8vo, pp. ii+33. Published by Mr. R. H. Porter, 1892.

and state of plumage of the 1,126 specimens of 308 species then in the collection formed by himself and his father, and since that date the collection has continuously grown in size and in importance. His *Catalogue of the Birds of Prey*,* published two years later, demonstrates his intimate knowledge of this class of Birds. If his "Gannet Book" (as he used to call it) is his best known work, his *Early Annals of Ornithology*,† published in 1921, was the book which he most



enjoyed writing for he had a real love of antiquarian research and of old time literature, and in this connection it may be mentioned that he possessed a large library containing many ornithological books and pamphlets of which some were of great rarity.

The publications mentioned above may be regarded as J. H. Gurney's more important books, but his contributions

* *Catalogue of the Birds of Prey (Accipitres and Striges)*, 1 vol. 8vo, pp. 56. Published by Mr. R. H. Porter, 1894.

† *Early Annals of Ornithology*, 1 vol. 8vo, pp. iv + 240. Published by Messrs. H. F. & G. Witherby, 1921.

to the scientific magazines of his day give the most direct evidence as to his unremitting zeal in the study of birds. Such notes as he contributed were always careful and concise and his "Ornithological Notes from Norfolk" (published in either *The Zoologist*, *British Birds* (Magazine), or *The Transactions of the Norwich and Norfolk Naturalists' Society*) were continued without intermission from 1879 up till the time of his death, and this series of notes is in itself an exemplary record of continuity and energy.

It was only to be expected that J. H. Gurney should have taken a keen interest in local ornithology and he was one of the original members of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society which was founded in March, 1869, and of which he was President in 1881-2, 1888-9, 1898-9 and 1919-20. He was always a generous supporter of the local Wild Birds' Protection Societies and when these became merged under the supervision of the local Naturalists' Society in 1921, he was elected President of the Norfolk Wild Birds' Protection Committee. For many years he was associated with the work of the Norwich Museum and he was co-opted on the Museum Committee in 1894, when the collections were transferred to the Castle. His father had made the collection of raptorial birds one of the first in the world and the son dutifully carried on his work in obtaining new specimens as they became available and in materially assisting the Museum authorities with his wide knowledge of birds.

J. H. Gurney has been described as "a man of striking appearance, a noticeable personality in any gathering and a careful speaker whose words always carried weight. Although at times showing a certain brusqueness, due to concentration of thought, he was ordinarily a delightful, well-informed companion, always ready to give of his store of knowledge to those who sought his assistance."* I remember his delighted amusement at being described by a Scots game-keeper as "yon man who is terrible fond of birds," and his death, at Keswick Hall near Norwich on 8th November, 1922, has brought sorrow to a far wider circle of friends than that composed of ornithologists, for he was regarded by all who had the privilege of knowing him as one whose sole aim in life was to do as much good as he could to his fellow-men.

H.S.G.

* *Eastern Daily Press*, 10th November, 1922.

HENRY JOHN ELWES.

British Birds is not the magazine to record in detail the various and memorable achievements both in travel and in science performed by the late Henry John Elwes; for this reason the following article has been considerably curtailed and has taken the form of a personal reminiscence rather than that of an obituary notice.

Elwes once described himself to me as a "jack of all trades and master of none," but it has been said of him that "he was perhaps the greatest living traveller of the day, an authority second to no one in Europe on trees, a lepidopterist whose collections enrich our national museum at South Kensington, the author of what is still the authoritative work on Lilies and a big-game hunter and ornithologist of great repute."

Henry John Elwes was the eldest son of John Henry Elwes and Mary, daughter of the late Sir R. Bromley, 3rd Baronet of Stoke, Newark, and he was born at Elm Green, near Cirencester, on 16th May, 1846. In due course he was sent to a private school near Tunbridge Wells at which were twelve other boys (including the Hon. Thomas de Grey, afterwards Lord Walsingham and famous as an entomologist, ornithologist and game-shot) all of whom were keen on natural history. In 1857 he went to Eton where, so Elwes told me, he spent most of his time—and all his pocket money—on birds; only six years ago he vividly recalled his chagrin when a Great Northern Diver's egg (bought for ten shillings from Joseph Dunn the collector in the Orkneys and Shetlands) arrived at Eton smashed in the post. He left Eton at the early age of sixteen as it was thought that he was not studious enough, but two years later he passed sixth out of one hundred and twenty-six candidates for the Army. He was gazetted to the 1st Battalion Scots Guards in 1865 and thereafter any leave that he could obtain was spent in travel. He made more than one expedition to the Hebrides and the Orkneys in pursuit of Wild Fowl and these trips gained him the sobriquet of "The Wild Goose" or "Wild Goose Chaser." On one visit to Islay he killed five different species of Geese and when in the Orkneys he used to shoot with Joseph Dunn, employing the same boat's crew as that with which Dunn was eventually drowned on 28th November, 1872. Elwes himself nearly lost his life off the Hebrides and it was curious how many ships in which he had sailed were afterwards wrecked.

After five years' service in the Guards Elwes retired with the rank of Captain and began that life of scientific travel

and adventure from which a rich harvest was to result. His father, so he told me, never taught him anything except how to ride, and he attributed the sound basis of all his scientific work to the instruction of such men as Alfred Newton, Osbert Salvin and Frederick Du Cane Godman (his brother-in-law and greatest friend) who persuaded him in 1866 to join the British Ornithologists' Union. Men such as these inculcated him with the precept that real solid work can only be achieved by thorough mastery of the subject in hand and he had the greatest dislike for "wishy washy spectacular articles" which he contemned as of no use for the advancement of science. He regarded Henry Seebohm (with whom he collected in Holland) as one of our outstanding modern ornithologists, but he readily ceded the *place d'honneur* to Alfred Newton.

Elwes's first publication appeared in *The Ibis* of 1867* the subject being Birds of Prey in Scotland, and this was followed two years later by "Bird Stations of the Outer Hebrides."† To the same journal he contributed a joint paper with T. E. Buckley, in 1870, on the Birds of Turkey‡ and in 1880 "Field-notes on the Birds of Denmark";§ he also wrote a revision of the genus *Henicurus*¶ and described a new *Crossoptilon* from Tibet.** His paper "On the Geographical Distribution of Asiatic Birds," published in 1873,†† is his most important contribution to Ornithology and to it he attributed his election as Fellow of the Royal Society in 1897. He was not, however, a regular contributor to the ornithological literature of his day, though in the course of his travels he often came across little known species and in 1912 he succeeded in bringing home alive several specimens of the Mikado Pheasant from Formosa. In 1921 he was elected President of the British Ornithologists' Union and he held this position at the time of his death, when he was its oldest Member.

A very brief summary of his achievements other than ornithological is perhaps permissible:—As a traveller he made extensive journeys in Turkey, Asia Minor, Tibet, and India four times, in North America, Mexico, Chile, Russia and

* *The Ibis*, 1867, pp. 143-4.

† *Loc. cit.*, 1869, pp. 20-37.

‡ *Loc. cit.*, 1870, pp. 59-77, 188-201, 327-31.

§ *Loc. cit.*, 1880, pp. 385-389.

¶ *Loc. cit.*, 1872, pp. 250-262.

** *Loc. cit.*, 1881, pp. 399-401.

†† *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, 1873, pp. 645-682.



Elliott & Fry, *Phot.*]

J. J. Lives

Born May 16th, 1846.

Died November 26th, 1922.

Siberia three times ; in Formosa, China and Japan twice, and in Nepal and Sikkim. In short Elwes's career in life may almost be said to have been peripatetic for he would set off for Tampico or Ta-Kao as unconcernedly as any ordinary man would leave London for Brighton. This love of travel was probably in part hereditary, for his uncle Robert Elwes had, in his time, been a great traveller.* As a botanist it may be claimed for Henry John Elwes that he introduced many species to this country and the *Botanical Magazine* figured no less than eighty-seven plants of his growing or finding, many of which are now familiar in our gardens. His great monograph on the genus *Lilium* appeared in 1880 and is still regarded as the standard work on the subject. As an arboriculturist he devoted much attention to practical forestry and he will ever be famous for his monumental work *The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* (begun in 1906 and finished in 1913), written in conjunction with his friend Professor Augustine Henry, and in this connection it may be noted that Elwes expressed himself as much in favour of the advantages to be gained by two men collaborating in the writing of a book. As a lepidopterist he published twenty-seven papers, between the years 1880 and 1896, describing numerous new species of his own finding, and his paper on the "Lepidoptera of Sikkim," printed in the *Transactions of the Entomological Society*, is perhaps the most noteworthy ; in 1902 he presented his collection of Palæarctic Butterflies to the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. He was the official representative of Great Britain at the Botanical and Horticultural Congresses at Amsterdam in 1877 and at St. Petersburg in 1884, and was the Scientific Member of the Indian Embassy to Tibet in 1886. He was a past President of the Royal Arboricultural Society and of the Entomological Society of London ; past vice-president of the Royal Horticultural Society, of which he was Victoria medallist, and he was, besides, a member of numerous other learned societies.

As a large landowner he took far more than the usual interest in agriculture than is displayed by the ordinary country squire and he strove to advance the prosperity of the industry by testing, and when possible adopting, approved methods and appliances. The various phases of sheep raising received his close and constant attention and he was

* Robert Elwes wrote and illustrated "*A Sketcher's Tour round the World*": 1854, and "*W.S.W., a voyage in that direction to the West Indies*": 1866.

the owner of one of the few English flocks of pure-bred Shetland sheep. As a sportsman he was born and bred. He has been described as a lucky rather than a patient fisherman and, though very keen on ordinary shooting, it was the quest of big-game which of all sports appealed to him most. He was devoted to fox-hunting in his own country where he may be said to have been the Father of the Cotswold Hunt; a noted fox-preserved his coverts were never drawn blank. In politics he was a staunch Conservative. He was a Justice of the Peace, a Deputy Lieutenant for Gloucestershire, and at one time he interested himself in local government, both on the Board of Guardians and on the Bench.

The above is but a brief summary of the achievements of a crowded and useful life. Henry John Elwes died at his home at Colesborne on 26th November, 1922, being survived by his widow and only son, Lt.-Col. Cecil Elwes, D.S.O., M.V.O. A few words must suffice here to describe his wonderful home in the Cotswolds which he inherited from his father in 1897, and of which he was passionately fond. Those who had the pleasure of staying at Colesborne were amazed at the collections and trophies which Elwes had acquired in all parts of the world and which were to be found throughout the house; whilst his gardens with their rows of hothouses filled with the rarest of plants and his forestry experiments and rare trees, vied in interest with the strange sheep and deer which were kept in paddocks near the house. But inside or outside Colesborne the man himself was the commanding feature; six feet in height, nobly proportioned, erect of carriage and strikingly handsome, Elwes was above everything else a fluent talker. That he was versatile to a degree has been shown and though his critics might regard him as impracticable, arbitrary and even self-opinionated, no one could but envy him his wonderful power of assimilating knowledge, his prodigious memory and his kindness of heart which was as thoughtful as that of a woman. Many amusing stories have been told against him. For example, it is said that on one occasion he was asked to meet an official of the British Museum who was a recognized authority on sheep. Having been introduced, before the controversial subject had even been mentioned, the British Museum man was about to speak when Elwes clapped him on the back and said, "Now I know what you're going to say, but you're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong." Elwes used to be invited annually to shoot by the late Lord Sherborne, but the year he went to Formosa he was unable to turn up at Sherborne. One of the

usual guests, remarking his absence, asked at dinner, "Where is Elwes?" "Gone to Formosa," replied someone. "But there are cannibals there, aren't there?" "Yes," said Lord Sherborne, "but I do not advise them to eat Elwes, he is sure to *disagree* with them." But if there are stories against Elwes they are only the penalty of greatness, for that he was a great man nobody can deny; whilst of his generosity and thoughtfulness only those who experienced them are qualified to judge. It seemed an inexorable fate that Elwes, brilliant conversationalist as he was, should have been struck down in the last few months of his life by a malady which deprived him of his power of speech. This was a premonition that his end was not far off and the calm way in which he busied himself with the preparation of his biography and set about the disposal of his treasures and possessions was a matter of wonderment to all. Orders which could no longer be given by word of mouth had each to be laboriously written down, but there were no complaints and no lamentations; throughout his life Henry John Elwes had commanded admiration not only for his energy but also for his determination; up to the last he showed, what had probably been his life-long characteristic, pluck.

H.S.G.