

OBITUARY.

WILLIAM ROBERT OGILVIE GRANT.

MR. W. R. OGILVIE GRANT, who died on July 26th, 1924, was well known as an active ornithologist and head of the Bird Room at the British Museum up to 1916, when he was suddenly struck down by paralysis and had since lived in retirement near Reading. To his intimate friends his loss will be keenly felt, for he was of an affectionate and generous nature, and though he has been missing from the ornithological world for so long, there are many in the large circle who knew him who have kept a warm corner in their hearts for him. He made enemies, too, for he was imbued with an ardent and combative spirit, and this trait frequently led him into arguments which were not always unaffected by personal feeling.

Ogilvie Grant was born on March 25th, 1863, the second son of the Hon. G. H. E. Ogilvie Grant, his mother being a daughter of Sir William Gordon-Cumming. He was educated at Fettes, and in June, 1882, became an assistant in the Zoological Department of the British Museum, at first under Dr. Gunther in the fish section and in 1885 under Dr. Bowdler Sharpe in the bird room. In 1893 he became a first class Assistant and in 1913 was appointed Assistant Keeper of the Zoological Department.

Ogilvie Grant wrote Volume XXII. (Game Birds) of the *Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum* and parts of Volumes XVII. and XXVI. of the same great work, and Volume V. of the *Catalogue of Eggs*, while he was also author of the *Guide to the Bird Gallery* and of the *Game Birds* (2 vols.) in Allen's *Naturalists' Library*, and was responsible for the natural history of the birds in *The Gun at Home and Abroad* and for the bird section in H. O. Forbes's *Fauna of Sokotra and Abd-el-Kuri*. He contributed a great number of systematic papers to the *Ibis* and communications to the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, of which he was editor for a number of years. He also contributed papers and notes to the *Proceedings and Transactions of the Zoological Society*, the *Field*, *British Birds* and other journals. Undoubtedly his best work was done in the game birds. Among the many new birds he described must be mentioned the Irish Coal-Tit (*Parus ater hibernicus*).

As a collector Ogilvie Grant excelled, and he made journeys for this purpose to Sokotra (with H. O. Forbes), Madeira, the

Canary Islands and the Azores, while he was largely responsible for the work of organizing and financing other expeditions, such as those to Ruwenzori and Dutch New Guinea, which made valuable additions to the British Museum collection. He also procured, or himself collected, the material for a number of the nesting groups of British birds in the Museum.

As "curator" of the great systematic collection he was not so successful, as he unfortunately did not realize the significance and great importance of the sub-species, and thus following Bowdler Sharpe (who was also reactionary in this respect, though his age excused him) the arrangement of our great national collection fell sadly behind the times. That this had a serious effect on British ornithologists is undoubted, and although great endeavours have been made, and much has been done since the war to arrange the collection in a form suitable for modern work, the task is so great that it is as yet by no means completed, and ornithologists are in consequence even now handicapped by the long neglect to progress with the times. During his later years at the Museum Ogilvie Grant was beginning to realize the importance of sub-specific distinction, and it is fair to assume that had he continued there he would have seen how urgently necessary was a rearrangement of the collection.

Ogilvie Grant served on the Council of the British Ornithologists' Union, Zoological Society and Avicultural Society, as well as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and was active in promoting bird protection and nature reserves.

He married, in 1890, a daughter of Vice-Admiral Mark Pechell, who survives him with one son and three daughters.
H.F.W.