OBITUARY.

THE REV. F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

(1865-1940.)

For just thirty-one years Jourdain has given us most constantly his very valuable help and expert advice in the conduct of this Magazine, and his sudden passing away makes a loss which is difficult to realize and impossible to exaggerate: it is indeed irreparable.

He had been ailing some time and felt the cold weather very severely, but he was always resentful of any disability and persisted in struggling on with his work. He insisted on fulfilling a long-standing engagement to lecture at Oxford in February and although he was really very ill he braced himself for the occasion and spoke in his usual fluent and interesting way. He was unable to do much after this, but he was of an indomitable nature, and he was downstairs attempting to work within four days of his death.

Francis Charles Robert Jourdain was born on March 4th, 1865. He was the eldest son of the late Rev. F. Jourdain, vicar of Ashbourne-cum-Mapleton. He was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. in 1887 and M.A. in 1890, in which year he was ordained. After curacies in Suffolk he was appointed vicar of Clifton-by-Ashbourne in 1894, and remained there for twenty years until 1914 when he became rector of Appleton, near Abingdon, Berkshire. In 1925 he retired and lived for a short while in Norfolk, but in 1927 moved to Southbourne, Bournemouth, where he was residing at the time of his death, which occurred on February 27th, 1940, a week before his 75th birthday. He was buried at Clifton, near Ashbourne.

He married in 1896 Frances Emmeline, daughter of William Richard Smith of Clifton. His wife inherited the Clifton property from her brother, the Rev. F. C. Smith, and at her death in 1933, Jourdain became tenant for life of this property, which now passes to his daughter Miss V. Jourdain. He also leaves a son Major F. W. S. Jourdain.

As an ornithologist Jourdain will be remembered first for his intimate and exact knowledge of all that is known concerning the breeding biology of the birds of the Palaearctic Region and especially those of the western part of that area. It may be safely said that no one else was in any way his equal as an authority on this subject. He was always working hard to get the gaps filled, and to get observations on such difficult points as the share of sexes
and incubation and fledging periods. His paper on the subject in 1930 in this Magazine was illuminating. That so much had been done to fill the gaps between the time of the publication of the *Practical Handbook* and the present *Handbook* was in fact largely due to the stimulus given to the study of the subject by his exact statements of the known facts in the earlier work, and although this was a great satisfaction to him, he had the intention to urge again the importance of making more observations when his work on the *Handbook* was finished.

He had also worked many years in collecting together every scrap of knowledge on the nature of the food of birds. A good many have made researches on this subject from the economic stand-point, but Jourdain's careful compilations of records of the specific nature of food of each species are obviously of the greatest value to ornithologists. He had too a regard for the economic side, and as far back as 1903 had written a prize essay on the subject which was published by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, while in 1927 he wrote about the economic status of finches in the *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*.

He had a fine knowledge of geographical distribution, and here his numerous journeys in many parts of the western Palaearctic area stood him in great stead, while in all this work he made the best use of his very considerable linguistic abilities and was untiring in his search for facts both in literature and from correspondents in all parts of the world.

On these three subjects he has set out in his sections of the *Handbook* very exact records of the facts, and ornithologists will be glad to know that before his death he had completed his work on "Breeding" and "Food" for volume 4, and very nearly that for the "Distribution Abroad." For the remaining 50-60 species to be dealt with in volume 5 he has left very careful notes.

Jourdain's capacity for work, both physical and intellectual, was remarkable, and he was tireless both in the field and with his pen. He was constantly engaged in writing about birds, and often worked far into the night. Many of these contributions were in the form of notes, letters and papers in ornithological journals of many kinds both at home and abroad, and a selection of these is given at the end of this notice. In longer tasks he was rather lacking in a determination to complete the work, not indeed because he was at any time idle, but for the reason that he was led away on to new tasks, and being always willing to help others.
this often resulted in so much research and labour that it kept him from completing his own work. The following notes will give some idea of his more extensive literary work.

In 1906 he published the first part of a work on The Eggs of European Birds, which was planned to be completed in ten parts, but only four were issued and the publishers failing, Jourdain never finished it. Between 1910 and 1913 he made important contributions with others to F. B. Kirkman's British Bird Book, and in 1930 was joint author with the same writer in a single volume under the title British Birds. In 1912 was issued the Hand-List of British Birds in which Jourdain collaborated with us, and shortly afterwards work was started on the Practical Handbook, though owing to the war publication of the first part was delayed until 1919. It may here be mentioned that during part of that war Jourdain edited this Magazine during the Editor's absence abroad. About this period he collaborated with W. H. Mullens and the late H. K. Swann in their useful Geographical Bibliography of British Ornithology, published during 1919 and 1920, and had assisted the authors mentioned in their previous Bibliography of British Ornithology. Amongst other important works in which he gave assistance must be mentioned especially Hartert's Die Vögel der palaarktischen Fauna and to a less extent A. C. Bent's later volumes of the Life Histories of American Birds. In 1930 he translated from the German Pastor Kleinschmidt's work The Formenkreis Theory.

Jourdain always attached great importance to gathering together and publishing local records and in this work he had a long experience and a critical judgment. He began such recording for his native county of Derby and published the first report for 1899 in the Zoologist, where it appeared annually for a number of years and was then continued in the Journal of the Derbyshire Natural History Society, and after a lapse of some years he again took over the task and acted as recorder up to his death. He also contributed sections on Zoology in the Victoria History of Derbyshire.

On becoming rector of Appleton near Abingdon, Berkshire, he soon began to take interest in the birds of the district and encouraged others to do so. This led to the formation of the Oxford Ornithological Society of which he was first President, and the annual report on the birds of Oxford, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, the first of which, covering the years 1915-22, was edited by Jourdain with B. W. Tucker. He subsequently contributed the section on birds to the Natural History of the Oxford District and collaborated with
E. Hartert on the Birds of Buckinghamshire. In recent years he has compiled annual reports on the birds of the Bournemouth district and of Hampshire. Since 1935 he has edited in conjunction with others The Oologists Record, a quarterly journal.

Jourdain organized and led the first Oxford expedition to Spitsbergen in 1921 and voyaged there again in 1922. He wrote papers on the birds and spent much time over several years in writing a book on the subject but unfortunately this was never completed and published.

Almost every year he made an ornithological excursion abroad and had thus studied birds in many parts of Europe and North Africa. He was a hard traveller, a very good observer and untiring in the field; only two years ago he was able to do a twelve-hour day in the Scottish highlands. These trips resulted in some valuable papers on the birds of Corsica, Cyprus, Dobrogea, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt and South Spain. In the last paper he gathered together all observations on the birds of South Spain but unfortunately completed only the part dealing with the Passeres.

One of the main objects of his trips was to collect eggs and add to his splendid collection, but apart from this Jourdain had always intense longing to be out among the birds, seeing them in different countries, observing and noting. He took note of everything and his diaries are wonderfully detailed and full of information. He also kept regular notes at home, and it is hoped that these extremely valuable records will be kept so that they are available for reference. It should be mentioned here that his handwriting was a marvel of neatness and that he was able to draw very nicely. He was a most enthusiastic collector but a discriminating one and he has often said that in collecting in the field about one clutch in five hundred found was the maximum he could expect to take. He also was constantly acquiring eggs to make his collection more complete. His aim was not only to have well-authenticated eggs of all the species in the western Palaearctic region, but that his collection should contain sufficient variety to illustrate the range of normal individual, and especially geographical, variation in form, size and coloration, as well as to show affinities or differences in specific or larger groups. That he had the true collector’s delight in an interesting or beautiful specimen or clutch is undoubted, but that he made the best possible use of his great collection from a scientific standpoint is acknowledged by all. It was his constant endeavour to make it illustrate to
the best advantage the kind of comparative and other biological principles already mentioned and he never tired of demonstrating such points to visiting ornithologists who were genuinely interested. His collection is thus a very notable one and it may safely be said that no other in this country, if, indeed, in Europe, is at the same time so extensive and so scientifically valuable.

He joined the British Ornithologists' Union in 1899, served on the Committee and was a vice-President (1934), and also for many years was a member of the British List Committee. He became a member of the British Ornithologists' Club in 1905 and was a regular attendant at the meetings, in the proceedings of which he frequently took part. The impetus which he gave to the study of birds at Oxford, as already mentioned, undoubtedly played a great part in preparing the ground for the developments, which led in later years to the foundation of the British Trust for Ornithology and the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology in the University. Of the Trust he was an original member and served on the council as well as being up to the time of his death a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee. He was also one of the originators of the British Oological Association of which he was President from 1932 to 1939 and served as editor of the Bulletin for several years.

He was an honorary fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union and an honorary member of the ornithological societies of France, Holland, Germany and Hungary. He was also a member of the International Ornithological Committee and was chairman of section III at the Berlin (1910) and Copenhagen (1926) Congresses, while of the Oxford Congress (1934) he was the honorary secretary and edited the Proceedings of that Congress.

He had quite an exceptional memory which was remarkably accurate in detail. Though he kept carefully written records this faculty was of the greatest assistance to him in his work, while in discussions it was an unfailing advantage. He had a horror of any statement which he knew to be inaccurate and always felt it a stern duty to correct such statements so far as he could. It was very seldom indeed that he was wrong in his facts, but his criticisms were usually very severe and made in a satirical style which though often very humorous was sometimes too caustic to be wise. This made him enemies and caused some dislike though all could not but admire him for his great knowledge and accuracy. Nevertheless this irrepressible trait, as he himself well knew, kept him from
some of those high honours in the ornithological world for which his great attainments undoubtedly fitted him.

However characteristic was that withering style of his public controversies, to those who knew him well and especially those of a younger generation, this was far outweighed by his remarkable sympathy and inexhaustible kindness and helpfulness. No estimate of his character could be true without stressing this side of it. His mind was a store-house of precise knowledge, and he had the gift of being able to impart it to others with clarity. He was indeed always ready to give help and advice to any true seeker after knowledge and his understanding and encouragement of those at the outset of their career in ornithology formed one of the great features of his life and work.

To the end Jourdain was intensely interested in every phase of bird-life and was ever searching for the truth, and it may truly be said of him that ornithology never had a truer or more enthusiastic and devoted servant.

A SELECTED LIST OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL WRITINGS OF F. C. R. JOURDAIN.


1906-12. The Eggs of European Birds. (Incomplete: Parts I-IV only issued out of 10 planned.)


1910-13. *The British Bird Book.* (Some twenty chapters and collaboration in classified notes and bibliography.)


The birds of Spitsbergen and Bear Island. *Ibis*, pp. 159-179.

The hitherto known birds of Marocco. (With E. Hartert.) *Nov. Zool.*, 30, pp. 91-152.


1932. *The truth about the Kite.* Pamphlet.

Noties on Spitsbergen. (With others.) *Bull B.O.A.,* pp. 77-91.


The Bald Ibis (*Comatibiseremita).* *Ool. Rec.,* 14, pp. 2-5.


Progress in Ornithology during the past half-century. *S. East Nat.,* pp. 43-51.


H. F. W.
F. C. R. Jourdain
Corsica, June, 1937.

(Photographed by John Armitage.)