

Obituary

MR. R. T. LITTLEJOHNS

It is with deep regret that the death is announced of Raymond T. Littlejohns who died from a sudden heart attack on January 21, 1961. Ray Littlejohns had been a member since 1912 and had just completed a term of office as President of the Union. His presence will be sadly missed by the members of the Council and his many friends.

A full obituary notice will be published in the next part of *The Emu*.—R.P.C.

MR. C. E. BRYANT, C.M.B.O.U., C.F.A.O.U. (1902-1960)

(Portraits: see *The Emu*, Vol. 51, plate 14; Vol. 58, plate 5.)

Charles Ernest William Bryant, the Honorary Editor of *The Emu* for more than 30 years and a past-president of the Union, died suddenly at his home at North Balwyn, Melbourne, Victoria, on October 27, 1960, aged 58 years. His influence on the affairs of the Union and on Australian ornithology in general, will be felt for many years to come. Although Mr. Bryant had been in ill health for several months and had relinquished his editorship on this account in July, the end was unexpected.

C. E. W. Bryant, ornithologist and lawyer, was born at North Fitzroy, Melbourne, on June 12, 1902, the son of Charles J. and Elizabeth A. (Philpot) Bryant. After studying law at Melbourne University he was admitted to the Victorian Bar in May 1929. A month later he married Dulcie M. Peart, who was to become his constant help and companion in all his many activities. At the time of his death he was a partner in the Melbourne legal firm of Moule, Hamilton and Derham.

Charles Bryant's dual career in ornithology and law commenced in November, 1929, when he was appointed Honorary Editor of *The Emu* in succession to the late Dr. Leach. Previously he had been Assistant Editor for little more than a year. Bryant, who in a very short time had already made his mark in the local ornithological world, applied himself with characteristic vigour and enthusiasm to his new responsibilities. How great these were to become in later years was realized by none, including the young Bryant.

He interested himself in every aspect of ornithology, which was to stand him in good stead in the future. One of his first achievements, of which he was justly proud, was the mastery of the scientific names of birds. His interest in this subject never waned and he kept himself familiar with the latest trends in avian taxonomy and nomenclature throughout his life. A natural "field" observer of the highest integrity, he quickly became an expert on several difficult

groups of birds and was among the first of the younger generation of ornithologists to pay particular attention to the migratory waders, or shore-birds. Later he spent much time photographing wild birds in their native haunts. One of the first of his many services to the Union was the sorting and labelling of the skin collection housed in the Union room, with the assistance of E. S. Hanks. He reported the completion of this task at the 29th Annual Congress in Brisbane. Quite early in his career he was appointed to the committee which was considering amendments to the Articles of Association of the Union. He was Convener of that committee when he resigned in August 1955.

Bryant, as editor, had very definite views regarding *The Emu* and its contents. Soon after his appointment he established a section devoted to reviews of current literature. This was to become a regular feature of the magazine; the majority of contributions came from his own pen. Here, as in all his writings, his keen-eyed wisdom was revealed.

Bryant's influence as editor was soon felt in many quarters. A prolific letter-writer, he commenced, and maintained for many years, a formidable correspondence with ornithologists in all parts of Australia and overseas. In the year 1932 he said, "*The Emu*, which it cannot be gainsaid, is largely the means of holding Union members together." Minor criticisms of editorial policy, from time to time, led him to declare (1936), "*The Emu*, of course, must remain a judicious blend of the popular and scientific—ornithology in Australia is not strong enough to retain the interest of the majority of members if the latter aspect were made too paramount." This policy, without doubt, minimized the steady downward trend of the membership in the difficult years prior to World War II. On the vexed question of "bird lists" he stated (1934), "full notes about a few species are, generally speaking, preferable to a list." However, to the "chief objectors" of lists he said, "Perhaps some of the complainants will set an example with an occasional contribution of the nature indicated."

C. E. Bryant, the editor, continually endeavoured to improve the quality of his journal. He re-wrote or re-typed many of the articles submitted, gave unstinted help to beginners and would-be authors, and was methodical and painstaking in all things connected with the production of the magazine. His own contributions were regular and varied and, as shown by the McGill Index, considerable. They included narrative accounts of Union congresses and camp-outs, photographs and descriptions of birds and their habits, reviews of books and periodicals, numerous obituary notices (which were admirable but often hastily prepared after requests to other writers had met with no response), and, from time to time, comments on various aspects of ornithology and Union policy.

Many of his pronouncements hold good to this day. For

instance, on collecting he stated (1932), "Whatever might be the ideas of individual members regarding collecting, it is obvious that extensive collecting is still necessary to make the collections in our Museums representative." Commenting on a suggestion to exclude collectors from Union camps (1935) he pointed out that "it was certainly depriving them of one of the privileges of membership, i.e. the right to participate in camps, and if any disruption were likely to occur he would rather see the camps discontinued. The crux of the whole matter was the permit—if collecting were only to be tolerated under permit there should be no trouble." This view was contained afterwards in the first of a series of recommendations submitted to the membership by a committee, consisting of Messrs. Chisholm, Ross, Howe and Bryant, which was formed to examine the whole question of collecting (see *Emu*, 36: 66).

Charles Bryant was keenly interested in the protection of native birds. At the Brisbane Congress (1930) it is recorded in *The Emu* that he referred to "the administration of the game laws in the different States, to the ruses adopted by dealers desirous of introducing birds to Australia, for example, their declaring them as species considered as not harmful, and to the advisability of having numerous small sanctuaries which would be properly controlled in preference to large sanctuaries that could not be adequately governed." In the year 1941 he put before Council the question of the trapping of rare parrots in South Australia and Western Australia and in 1945 drew attention to the depredations by troops on protected birds in the Northern Territory.

In the year 1944, Bryant announced to Council that on his representations *The Emu* was totally exempted from the wartime restrictions of newsprint and that the magazine would continue to be printed on good quality paper. He constantly appealed, with success, for donations towards the cost of producing *The Emu* and maintaining its accustomed standard: inflationary trends between the years 1949 and 1955, for example, had increased production costs by 33 per cent.

In connection with the publication of A. R. McGill's "A Species Index to *The Emu*", Bryant was responsible for arranging generous grants from the M. A. Ingram Trust and the Commonwealth Government. He also obtained a substantial donation from Sir Edward Hallstrom.

Unfortunately Charles Bryant frequently came "under fire" regarding editorial policy during his long and faithful service to the Union. Intolerant of nonsense, he dismissed many criticisms and suggestions as "impracticable". One member, who had complained that the colour of the cover of *The Emu* made it difficult to read the table of contents was reprehended with the remark that tables of contents were to be consulted, not read! These and other matters in connection with the production of *The Emu* were referred to by

Bryant in his presidential address at the 1957 Annual Congress which was held in Melbourne. Of the 249 parts of *The Emu*, consisting of 18,594 pages, which have appeared since its commencement, more than one half were produced under Bryant's editorship; the exact figures are 133 parts and 10,630 pages respectively.

Of course, in addition to his rôle as editor, Charles Bryant played many other parts in Union activities. His legal training and knowledge made him an estimable member of any committee. The exact number on which he served at one time or another is unknown to the writer. However, in December 1938, he became the first Convener of the present Checklist Committee and remained a member until his untimely death. In November 1939, he was appointed to a small committee, the other members being Messrs. Chisholm and Jones, whose task it was to consider the matter of uniform bird protection in Australia. On another occasion, following representations made by members in States other than Victoria, he was delegated, together with J. A. Ross, to enquire into the legal position regarding the loan of specimens from the H. L. White collection, which had been presented to the National Museum of Victoria in 1917. He was Convener of the Honours Committee and in the year 1951 Council elected him a Trustee of one of the Union's investments. He became a Vice-President in 1951 and served two terms as President (1956-7).

Bryant's first concern, at all times, was the welfare of the Union. He took every opportunity of increasing revenue by canvassing for new members on every occasion. Sometimes, at public gatherings, he would single out a prospective member and spend hours in conversation with him before asking for his support. His efforts in this direction rarely failed.

In the year 1948, Bryant was appointed an Honorary Associate in Ornithology at the National Museum of Victoria and the following year he became a member of the Committee of Management of the Sir Colin McKenzie Sanctuary at Healesville.

Charles Bryant was a man of wide interests and led a very full life. He was, of course, very familiar with his home State and he made many trips to all parts of Australia in search of birds, when he was usually accompanied by his wife. In the year 1957 they visited Lord Howe Island and in 1959 they spent some time in the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. One of his favourite haunts was Altona, a district which he declared was "never failing in surprises" so far as birds were concerned. In addition to the "usual Melbourne district conglomeration of Asiatic migrants" this place is noted for the nesting colonies of Silver Gulls and the occasional visitations of species which are often described as rare. On Bryant's suggestion, made soon after he became acquainted with the area, the owners, Cheetham Salt Pty. Ltd., proclaimed the salt works property a sanctuary. The

Union approached the Fisheries and Game Department to have the decision put into effect and gazettal eventually took place.

Over a period of several years, a series of papers by Bryant appeared in *The Emu* under the title "Photography in the Swamps". These contributions were illustrated with photographs taken by himself, of a variety of water-loving birds which frequent the vicinity of the River Yarra at Bulleen Ponds, Heidelberg, and other places near Melbourne. Various photographs of birds, taken at Fishermen's Bend, Altona, and elsewhere were also published in *The Emu* and in addition he provided some of the illustrations which accompanied the reports of several annual camp-outs.

Charles Bryant was a regular contributor to the popular magazine *Wild Life*, which ceased publication some years ago.

Our late editor was very interested in the older ornithologists and their exploits. An entertaining and talented conversationalist and public speaker, he had an amazing store of lively anecdotes about the "great" and the not so great. Some of these are the subjects for good-humoured satire in an "anonymous" (more or less) publication, of which two parts appeared, called *The Emulet*, with Bryant the major contributor. On Union affairs his memory was phenomenal and, when required, he could quote happenings and statements, no matter when they occurred, accurately and with the greatest ease.

Recognition of his ornithological attainments came in the year 1950 when he was elected a Corresponding Member of the British Ornithologists Union and a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union, and again in 1957 when, as the nominee of the Victorian National Parks Association, he was awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion.

For all his achievements, Charles Bryant was an unassuming man who rarely thought of himself. He never failed to carry out his commitments to the full and his example was an inspiration to others. Fearless when expressing his views (and perhaps a little quick-tempered), he was, by nature, kindly disposed towards all men and there must be many who owe him much for his encouragement of their early efforts. To his friends and the members of our Council he will always be remembered simply as "Charlie"—wise counsellor and genial companion.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow and son, Mr. David Bryant, in their bereavement and hope that they will gain some comfort from our belief that there will never be another like him.—H.T.C.