

Review.

Dr. A. L. Thomson's "Birds."—Messrs. Williams and Norgate, the London publishers, have included in their cheap pocket-books of the Home University Library a new work by A. Landsborough Thomson, D.Sc., succinctly titled *Birds*. This little volume does all that it pretends to do, which is to give a general account of the characteristics of birds as living creatures, and provide an incentive to the further study of a fascinating subject. Dr. Thomson not only writes well, but he has a broad and sound grasp of his subject. One or two of his points regarding Australian birds may be open to question—as when he suggests that only the male Bower-Bird builds a playground—but there is certainly nothing seriously wrong in this very useful and entertaining little book. It is of interest to note that the author sets an example of "lumping" that might be worth following in regard to the vernacular names of birds. The black-headed gull, for instance, is written by him "blackheaded-gull;" the lesser black-backed gull becomes "lesser-blackbacked-gull;" the great spotted cuckoo, is the "great-spotted-cuckoo;" and so on.

Obituary.

DR. E. W. FERGUSON.

Natural science lost a valuable worker and Australian naturalists a firm friend and colleague by the untimely death of Dr. Eustace W. Ferguson, who died in Sydney on July 18, 1927. Some 25 years ago, when I was chatting with the veteran Curator of the Macleay Museum, George Masters, he was loud in the praise of a young undergraduate who was bringing him for determination beetles captured around Sydney and the Blue Mountains that he (Macleay's most famous collector) had never seen. Many companions of Dr. Ferguson in those bush rambles so dear to the nature lover have made similar comments as to his unusually developed powers of close observation. The tiniest insect, the least detail of vegetable and animal life, was noted, which the ordinary person or many a skilled naturalist passed unnoticed. His love of birds led him into a deep knowledge of Australian ornithology, and he wrote many informative papers on the subject in *The Emu* and other journals.

He soon made a name for himself amongst naturalists, first as a collector of and systematic worker with coleoptera, later (as his medical studies indicated) on Australian flies, especially mosquitoes and other biting flies. For some years he has

been recognized by scientific circles as *facile princeps* amongst medicinary entomologists, so that he was selected to lecture on this subject to the Pan-Pacific Congress held in Sydney in 1923. Last year, as President of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, his address—written while the dread Bright's disease held him in its grip—was a model epitome of the work done to the present date in this wonderful theatre of work—a work that is making safe the tropical world to the white man. Only twelve months ago the writer was one of a happy band of science pilgrims to the A.A.A.S. Congress at Perth. On this journey, and on the long expeditions organized by our hosts, Eustace Ferguson was always to the fore, delighting in the splendour of wild flowers, insects, and birds now seen for the first time in their own habitat. He contributed many papers to the Linnean and other scientific societies of Australia on his favourite subjects, and was the authority on the Phalidurine or ground weevils, peculiar to this continent—a group that had greatly puzzled previous workers, many of which he described, some discovered by himself. Of late years he wrote chiefly on the classification of Australian Diptera (flies), and an extensive addition to our knowledge of these has already resulted; alas, but a fraction of what we had hoped had he been permitted the ordinary span of man's life.

Born in New Zealand in 1884, graduating in Sydney in 1908, Dr. Ferguson entered the Department of Public Health in 1913. From 1915-1918 he served in the Australian Army Medical Corps in France and Palestine. In 1920 he succeeded Professor Cleland as Microbiologist to the Department of Public Health. Here his naturalist's eye could classify the microbe or bacillus with the same accuracy as in the larger scale of nature. His many friends will lament the untimely passing of a thoughtful and genial companion, whose wide reading and kindly temper made him welcome within or outside the house. A wife and six children, five sons and a daughter, mourn his loss.—H. J. CARTER.

Council Meetings, R.A.O.U.

At the June meeting of the Council deep regret was expressed at the death of Mr. H. L. White, and the action of the General Secretary in forwarding a letter of condolence to Mrs. White was endorsed.

It was decided to communicate with the Tasmanian Government, asking that steps be taken to protect Cape Barren Geese, and with the Chief Secretary of Victoria stating that the Union strongly opposes any recurrence of the general open season for opossums.

The following motion was also agreed to unanimously:—
"That, in view of the frequent requests for open seasons, and