

Obituary.

Lt.-Col. John Stephenson, I.M.S., C.I.E., F.R.S.

THE sad news of the sudden death of Lt.-Col. John Stephenson, C.I.E., M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.S., D.Sc., F.R.S., F.R.S.E., I.M.S. (retd.), on 2nd February 1933, came as a great shock to his old pupils and friends throughout India.

Colonel Stephenson was born in 1871 at Padiham, Lancashire, and was educated at the Burnley Grammar School and the University of Manchester. In Manchester he had a very distinguished career in zoology and medicine. After qualifying as a doctor Stephenson acted for a

time as the House Surgeon in the Manchester Royal Infirmary and the London Hospital for the diseases of the chest till in 1895 he passed the competitive examination for the Indian Medical Service. For the first five years of his service in India he was on military duty and saw active service with the North-West Frontier Expedition of 1897. He was posted as a medical officer on plague duty in the Punjab in 1900, and up to 1906 served as a Civil Surgeon in Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Ambala and other places. Early in 1906 he went on leave and

passed the Fellowship examination of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, with a view to appointment as Professor of Surgery in the Lahore Medical College. Fortunately for the study of zoology in India, the recent experiment of the transfer of the teaching of pure science subjects, like botany and zoology, from the Medical College to the Government College, Lahore, had not, for want of properly qualified teachers, proved the success that its initiators had hoped. The then Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Denzil Ibbetson, who was a personal friend of Colonel Stephenson, knew that Stephenson had studied zoology in Manchester under the famous professor A. Milnes Marshall, and knowing Stephenson's capacity as an organiser and worker, he prevailed on him to undertake the duties of the recently created

professorship of biology in the Government College, Lahore. He held this position till 1912 when, in addition to being the Professor of zoology, he was appointed Principal of the Government College, Lahore. He retired from service in India in September 1921, and went over to Edinburgh where he was appointed Lecturer in zoology in the University. In November 1929 he left Edinburgh for London and till shortly before his death he used to carry on zoological researches in the British Museum of Natural History as an unofficial worker.

On his appointment as Professor of biology in 1906 Stephenson, who had been out of touch with zoology for nearly eleven years, started earnestly to brush up his knowledge of the subject and bring it up-to-date. Though he had a fairly good teaching museum at his disposal there was neither a properly equipped laboratory nor any library worth the name in the Government College, Lahore. He was, however, able to get together before long a first-rate teaching museum, a very good working library and by 1914 had succeeded in having

a new biological laboratory built for the institution in which he was working. As a result of his labours, zoological instruction in Lahore attained a very high standard in a few years and he was able to found a very productive school of zoology in the Government College. Several students from his laboratory, in whom he instilled the faculty of critical work and careful investigation from the very beginning, are now holding influential zoological positions throughout the country, and it was solely due to his initiative and interest that a really flourishing school of zoological research was established in Lahore. His tenure of office was marked by conspicuous success as a teacher, while his administrative qualities were responsible for making the institution under his charge into a really



first-rate place of instruction. He also took a very active interest in the affairs of the Punjab University and in addition to being the Dean of the Faculty of Science, he acted during the last year of his stay in India as the Vice-Chancellor of the Punjab University.

Stephenson was not content with teaching zoology only, but started research work in zoology soon after his appointment in Lahore and by 1909 had produced a thesis which earned for him the degree of Doctor of Science of the London University. His researches from the very beginning were concentrated on the Oligochætes, and from 1907 onwards till shortly before his death he published numerous papers on Oligochætes of India and other areas. The results of his systematic work on Indian Oligochætes for over 16 years were collated in his volume on the Oligochætes in the "Fauna of British India" series and since that date he was recognized as one of the two chief authorities on this group of worms. In 1929 he completed the masterly morphological and systematic monograph on the Oligochætes which was published in 1930 by the Clarendon Press, Oxford. In addition to the systematic studies on the Oligochætes he carried out researches of outstanding character on the intestinal respiration of Oligochætes and worms in general, and published several very important morphological papers on the structure of these worms in the "Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh" and the "Proceedings of the Royal Society of London". His monograph on the Oligochætes clearly indicates his extensive knowledge of the structure and classification of the Oligochætes and a very thorough acquaintance with the literature on the subject. In addition he dealt in detail with such important questions as convergence, the polyphyletic origin of the various genera and families and the geographical distribution of earth-worms. In connection with the distribution of these worms he discussed in detail the former existence of an Antarctic continent and land-bridges between India and Australia on the one hand and the Peninsular

India and Africa on the other. He also published a very valuable account of the Nemertines of the River Clyde in the "Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh".

Stephenson was a great linguist and all his spare time was devoted to the study of early Persian authors. He published a collated edition of all the known manuscripts of *Hadikat-ul-Haqiqat* in the "Bibliothica Indica" published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal together with an English translation and annotations of the *Muzhat-ul-Qulub* in the publications of the Royal Asiatic Society of London.

For his work as an administrator and teacher Colonel Stephenson was awarded the title of C.I.E. in June 1919. His contributions to the advancement of knowledge were recognized by the award in 1920 of the Keith Memorial Medal of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and of the Barklay Memorial Medal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1925. He was Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and received the blue ribbon of science on his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1930. He was appointed Editor of the "Fauna of British India" series in May 1928 in succession to the late Sir Arthur Shipley and since 1931 he worked as the Zoological Secretary of the Linnean Society of London.

Colonel Stephenson was a very brilliant teacher and those who had the privilege of attending his lectures will never forget the care and pains he took in making the subject of lectures really instructive and interesting to his students. He was a sincere and loyal friend and all his friends will miss him for his sound judgment and ever-ready help in all matters relating to education and more particularly to the advancement of zoology in India and later in Great Britain. His extensive circle of friends feel his untimely death as a personal bereavement and extend their sincere and heart-felt condolence to Mrs. Stephenson in her irreparable loss.

B. P.