

OBITUARY.

George Vernon Hudson, F.R.S.N.Z. (1867-1946).

MR. G. V. HUDSON, one of the original Fellows of the Royal Society of New Zealand and for sixty-one years a member, also one of the original Honorary Members of the Wellington Branch of the Royal Society of New Zealand, died at his home, " Hillview," Karori, Wellington, on the 5th April, 1946. With his passing has gone the last remaining link with the old school of naturalists who did so much to firmly establish the natural sciences in New Zealand during the early pioneering days.

Born in London on Easter Saturday, 20th April, 1867, G. V. Hudson was the sixth child of Charles Hudson, of London, professional artist and designer of stained-glass windows. George received his early schooling in England; but his father encouraged his interest in natural history and trained him in the fine arts of painting and drawing. At the age of fourteen he left England with his father to settle in New Zealand. They left Gravesend on the 16th June, 1881, in the barque *Glenora*, and arrived at Wellington on 23rd September. Prior to leaving England George Hudson had already embarked on his entomological career: he had built up a small collection of British insects, published a short paper in *The Entomologist* in 1880, exhibited a hermaphrodite moth at a meeting of the Royal Entomological Society of London, and been a frequent visitor to the Library of the British Museum. At this early age he also was keenly interested in astronomy, already having observed and recorded an eclipse of the sun and made notes and summaries on the weather. On his arrival in New Zealand he turned his attention to the study of our native insects, and during his long life never lost any available opportunity to enjoy his hobby and further his interests in entomology. Settling first in Nelson, Hudson worked for a while on a farm; but in 1883, at the age of sixteen, he entered the employ of the Post Office in Wellington, where he rose to the position of Chief Clerk, Postal Division, a position from which he retired in 1918.

In 1885, Hudson joined the Wellington Branch of the Royal Society of New Zealand, or, as it then was called, the Wellington Philosophical Society. He was President of the Society in 1900 and 1901, and, in 1940, in recognition of his services to the Society and to New Zealand science, he was elected one of the first two original Honorary Members of the newly-constituted Wellington Branch of the Royal Society of New Zealand. From 1923 until the time of his death Hudson was a member of the Council of the Royal Society of New Zealand, representing, until 1931, the Wellington Philosophical Society, and, from 1932 onward, the Hawke's Bay Branch.

In 1938, as a representative of the Royal Society of New Zealand, he was elected a member of the Management Committee of the Dominion Museum, a position held by him at the time of his death, and to which he attended with his usual thoroughness and enthusiasm.

Shortly after his arrival in Wellington Hudson moved out into the then "wilderness" of the high hills of Karori, where he built his home overlooking the city of Wellington. In 1893 he married Florence Gillon, of the staff of the Girls' High School in Wellington, and in

later years their home, "Hillview" as it was called, became known to entomologists the world over. In his book, *Butterfly Hunting in Many Lands*, Longstaff mentions a pleasant evening spent there with Mr. Hudson and his collection.

Hudson's first scientific paper dealing with New Zealand insects was published in the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* in 1882, under the title: "A New Dipterous Insect." This was the first of many papers, notes and records on entomology contributed by him and which appeared in later volumes of the *Transactions*, the *Entomologists' Monthly Magazine*, the *Transactions of the Royal Entomological Society of London*, the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, the *N.Z. Journal of Science and Technology*, and *The Entomologist*. His greatest achievements, however, were in the publication of his books on New Zealand insects; and few men of science have been privileged to leave behind them such a monument to their own enterprise. When he arrived in this country as a boy, he conceived the idea of—as he put it—"doing" the New Zealand insects, a purpose from which he never faltered. Even at the time of his death he was engaged upon the preparation of the manuscript of a further book to be called *Fragments of New Zealand Entomology*. His first book, *Manual of New Zealand Entomology*, appeared in 1892 and still is the only general book on New Zealand insects. Although always interested in entomology in its widest sense, it was not long before G.V.H. found his main interests centering around the Lepidoptera; and in 1898 appeared his first major work dealing with these insects, *New Zealand Moths and Butterflies*. In 1903 this was followed by *New Zealand Neuroptera*, which is still a standard work for this country. Following upon his retirement from the Post Office, Hudson devoted almost his entire time to his entomological studies and concentrated on the completion of his great work, *The Butterflies and Moths of New Zealand*, which he published in 1928, and which eleven years later, was followed by *A Supplement to the Butterflies and Moths of New Zealand*. These two works contain figures in colour of all the known species of New Zealand Lepidoptera. These coloured figures, along with those in other books, amounting altogether to well over 3,000 separate drawings, were executed by Hudson himself with infinite patience and ever-improving skill. During later years he began to find Lepidoptera collecting somewhat strenuous and turned his attention more towards the Coleoptera, with the result that in 1934 he published *New Zealand Beetles*, a book that is finding ever-increasing popularity. As a background to his studies, Hudson amassed the finest and most perfect collection of New Zealand insects ever formed by any one person. Some idea of the firmness and steadfastness of purpose of the man can be gauged from the fact that the *Butterflies and Moths of New Zealand* took twenty-four years to complete. During this time Hudson not only identified and figured his species, but, by rearing and breeding experiments, worked out the life histories not only of many of our Lepidoptera, but also of numerous other important insects. Perhaps his most notable achievement in this sphere was the rearing of the New Zealand glow-worm. Hudson never failed to give recognition for assistance he received from others, and frequently in his conversation referred to the help he always had received from Edward Meyrick, the famous English Lepidopterist, with whom he had struck up a close and lasting friend-

ship very early in his life. Hudson was intolerant of what he termed "arm-chair naturalists," but believed in going into the field in search of nature; and in furtherance of this idea he made many excursions into the virgin country of New Zealand, collecting and observing. On earlier trips he nearly always was accompanied by his wife and later by his daughter. Both Mrs. Hudson and his daughter, in turn, took a keen interest in his work. He made many trips to the Southern Lakes District and the mountains of the South Island. His last big expedition, made at the age of sixty-five, was to Mount Arthur.

In 1907 he served as entomologist with a party of naturalists who visited the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand. Along with his entomological interests, Hudson developed a lively interest in astronomy. He observed the total eclipse of the sun in 1885 through his own telescope. Later, in the grounds of his home, he built his own observatory, equipped it with a 4½-inch telescope, and made continuous studies of sun spots, recording with notes and diagrams what he observed from day to day. His notes on these solar phenomena in the Wellington daily papers were familiar items of interest to everybody. On 9th June, 1918, he discovered a new star, subsequently known as *Nova Aquilae*, which attracted world-wide attention. Perhaps his greatest contribution to Astronomy arises from his being the original advocate of what has come popularly to be known as "Daylight Saving." On 16th October, 1895, before the Wellington Philosophical Society, he read a paper which, although not well received at the time, set out in detail the methods of a practice which has now become almost universal in all progressive countries. For his work in this direction he was awarded in 1933 the T. K. Sidey Summer Time Medal.

For his entomological work he was awarded, in 1923, the Hector Medal, and, in 1929, the Hutton Memorial Medal of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

In the midst of all his interests and enterprises Hudson always found time to listen to and to help those with interests kindred to his own. For a considerable period of years extending into the early 1930's, he held at "Hillview" monthly meetings of lads, and grown-ups, too, at which all manner of matters entomological were discussed. Here, too, many local lads had their first peep through a telescope, and in 1910, during the period of Halley's Comet, "Hillview" was inundated by interested visitors.

In his earlier years he also led many excursions of local enthusiasts on collecting and foraging expeditions around Wellington; and many people will recall happy afternoons spent in his company on the hills overlooking the city.

G. V. Hudson was a man who always forcefully expressed his opinions, speaking out for what he, personally, considered was right. Always a sturdy champion of youth, he maintained his opinions quite regardless of what others might think, an attitude that often got him into warm water, but which drew the admiration and respect of all who knew him well. His interest in and enthusiasm for his work was unbounded, and no one could come away from a few hours spent with him at "Hillview" without being imbued with the same enthusiasm and vitality that inspired Hudson to the moment of his death.

J. T. S.