amazed at the wealth of painstaking detail, presented so lucidly and concisely. The descriptions of new species are models of accuracy and completeness such as scarcely a single botanist of the present generation can or will try to follow. In his ability to judge specific and generic values he had few peers. His conservative but nevertheless progressive and modern treatment of such units puts to shame the hasty and often irresponsible publications of many of his contemporaries in both Europe and America.

A fitting climax to Dr. Urban's life work was his study and description in recent years of the extraordinary collections made in Cuba and Hispaniola by Dr. Erik L. Ekman. It had been supposed by some botanists that the flora of the Antilles was practically exhausted, at least so far as discovery of new species was concerned, but Ekman's explorations showed the fallacy of such a supposition. His work in those islands revealed hundreds of new species and numerous genera quite as distinct as any ever described.

The study of these collections engaged happily Dr. Urban's youthful enthusiasm until the very time of his death. The voluminous reports upon them that have come so frequently from his pen during the last few years show that age had not abated his industry or dimmed his keen discrimination.

Dr. Urban may be envied for the fact that the end came with little warning, and that he was able to continue his habitual activity in the herbarium until the time of his death. As a friend writes, "Fortunate the man who can go in the midst of contentment, and without suffering."

American botanists who have visited Berlin will be saddened by the announcement of the death of Dr. Urban, for all of them speak of him with genuine affection and esteem. His courtesy and sympathy toward them were unaffected and unfailing.

The writer knew Dr. Urban only by his publications and through kindly letters received at all too infrequent intervals. Nevertheless, so vivid an impression of his personality did these leave that he always was felt to be an intimate friend of long acquaintance, and the news of his passing was received with a deep sense of personal loss. To the field of West Indian botany the loss is a catastrophe, for there is no promise of an adequate successor to the place which Dr. Urban held.

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ERIK L. EKMAN

SCARCELY had there been placed in the mail an obituary notice of Dr. Ignatius Urban, when there was received, through the kindness of Dr. R. Ciferri, an announcement of the death in the Dominican Republic on January 15 of Dr. Erik L. Ekman. Dr. Urban was so advanced in years that his loss was not altogether unexpected, but Ekman was only forty-six, and of such rugged and vigorous physique that many more years of his habitual restless activity might confidently have been expected for him.

Already trained by field work in South America, Ekman went to Cuba early in 1914, and devoted the rest of his life to an investigation of the plant life of that island and Hispaniola. Cuba, it was presumed, had been rather well explored by earlier collectors, local, European and North American, but his work proved that theirs had been far from thorough. In Hispaniola the situation was somewhat different. The island was explored botanically a century ago, but for long years afterward it was difficult to travel there. Ekman's tireless industry led him to every corner of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, to many spots which no foreigner ever had seen. He said to the writer on one occasion, "When I have finished with Haiti, it will be hard for any other collector ever to find a new species there." This boast he undoubtedly made good.

Happily, he was able to complete to his satisfaction his exploration of Hispaniola. At the time of his death he was on the point of sailing for Venezuela, where he could expect to surpass even what he had accomplished in the West Indies. What he already had done was a life work for any man. In both Cuba and Hispaniola he had discovered hundreds of fine new species, and many equally good genera, besides adding to their recorded floras scores of plants already known from elsewhere.

Ekman had as many eccentricities as characterize most other scientists. No one who met him ever could forget him. He attracted much comment in Haiti by his frugality, which was the result of the limited means at his disposal, his utter indifference to conventions and his complete absorption in his work. Would that other naturalists might emulate him in devoting more pages to science and fewer to food and weather! He was bluntly frank in speech, a consequence of his well-founded confidence in his own knowledge. He had a profound scorn for shabby and incompetent work. His specimens and his acquaintance with the plants from which they came left nothing to be desired.

The writer once had an opportunity of witnessing for a few hours the manner in which Ekman botanized. He covered a rocky hillside with the agility of a wild animal, and attacked it as if it were an adversary. Heat and storm and hardship of travel were for him beneath consideration. It was thus that he was able to explore the remotest and most difficult mountains, where others feared to go. His perfect acquaintance with every Haitian plant enabled him to recognize immediately any new one that he saw.

For that reason he shared with Dr. Urban author-

ship of many new species that he discovered. He published also numerous entertaining and scientifically valuable papers upon plant geography, especially that of Hispaniola, and he wrote an admirable monograph of the tropical American *Vernonieae*. Botanical science will be vastly poorer for loss of other contributions that it hoped to receive from his pen.

It is a strange coincidence that Urban and Ekman, the two men who have contributed most to knowledge of the Antillean flora, should have ended their labor only a week apart. Ekman's life work was one which all botanists may envy, but very few may equal. He was a brilliant member of that long line of Swedish botanists who have made such eminent contributions to natural science.

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RECENT DEATHS

DR. PIERRE A. FISH, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University since 1929, when he succeeded the late Dr. Veranus A. Moore, died on February 19. He was sixty-six years old on February 17.

DR. JOHN CONRAD HEMMETER, from 1903 to 1922 professor of physiology and clinical medicine at the University of Maryland, died on February 25 at the age of sixty-seven years.

PHILIP P. QUAYLE, physicist for the Phillips Cartridge Company, and formerly a member of the staff of the Bureau of Standards, died suddenly at Lebanon, Ohio, on February 21. Mr. Quayle was a recognized authority on ballistics and had written the article on Spark Photography for the new edition of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica."

THE REVEREND CHARLES DOUGLAS PERCY DAVIES, of Kemerton Grange, Tewkesbury, president of the British Astronomical Association from 1924 to 1926, died on February 5.

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

INSTITUTION FOR SURGICAL BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT DOWNE

THE London *Times* states that the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons has accepted an offer from Mr. George Buckston Browne, F.R.C.S., to build and endow an Institution of Surgical Biological Research upon a 13-acre estate at Downe, Kent, which he proposes to present to the college for this purpose. At a council meeting on February 12 it was resolved that the council expressing its deep sense of Mr. Buckston Browne's great liberality, should undertake on behalf of the college to be responsible for the proposed institution, subject to an approved settlement under a deed of trust.

The estate concerned lies 16 miles from Charing Cross, adjoining the western side of Darwin's old home, "Down House," which was presented, with its 23 acres of ground, to the British Association two years ago by the same benefactor. Mr. Buckston Browne has announced his willingness to endow the new estate with an initial sum of £50,000, and to add further gifts or legacies until his total benefaction to the research institution (including the cost of the land) reaches the amount of £100,000.

In his letter to Lord Moynihan, president of the Royal College of Surgeons, and the members of the council, Mr. Buckston Browne states his belief that those who have added or are adding to the science and art of surgery are the greatest of all benefactors of the human race and the domesticated animal kingdom. He expresses, therefore, a wish to form an institution in which surgeons, and particularly young surgeons, will have full opportunity for carrying out their investigations.

The ultimate size and design of the building to be erected, and the form of equipment, service and staff are not laid down by Mr. Buckston Browne, but for the needs of the present laboratory workers, and of those surgeons who are now seeking an opportunity for testing inferences drawn from the clinical observation of certain diseases, he proposes the following initial provisions:

(1) Three or four laboratories where investigations can be made under the best conditions, or where living animals can be closely observed and cared for.
(2) Houses for animals.
(3) Accommodation for a chief attendant, skilled in laboratory methods.
(4) Accommodation for a stockman, who will look after and feed the animals.
(5) Hotel accommodation for those who may wish to carry on continuous work in the institution.

OBSERVATIONS FOR THE DETERMINATION OF LONGITUDES

A PUBLICATION has been issued by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey concerning observations for the determination of longitudes made simultaneously in 1926 by some 30 countries. The author, Clarence H. Swick, chief of the Section of Gravity and Astronomy, gives information about a world-wide longitude net of 40 basic stations determined in 1926.