OBITUARY

BOHUMIL SHIMEK

PROFESSOR BOHUMIL SHIMEK, member of the University of Iowa botany staff for the last 46 years, died at Iowa City, Iowa, on January 30, 1937, aged 75 years. His death was caused by heart complications following influenza. At the time of his death he was the second oldest member of the university staff. His name and work were inseparably linked with that of his noted naturalist colleagues, Thomas Huston Macbride, Charles C. Nutting and Samuel Calvin.

Professor Shimek was born in Shueyville, Iowa, on June 25, 1861, the son of Maria Theresa and Francis Joseph Shimek, political refugees who had immigrated to America from Bohemia in 1848. Professor Shimek's youth and education were closely bound up with the University of Iowa, which he entered in 1878 as a student of engineering. After attaining the C.E. degree, Professor Shimek was a railroad and county surveyor for two years. This early training and experience as an engineer resulted in unusual precision and exactitude in his later work in biology. In 1888 he accepted an instructorship in zoology at the University of Nebraska but returned to his alma mater in 1890 as a member of the botany staff. Professor Shimek's academic rise was rapid, as he soon became professor of botany, head of the department of botany, director of the Lakeside Laboratory, curator of the herbarium and later research professor. The high esteem in which Professor Shimek was held personally and as an educator was attested by the testimonial celebration tendered him by the university and the state of Iowa at the time of his retirement in 1932, at which time he had completed a fifty-year teaching career. The university in publishing his biography recognized his outstanding services as a pioneer, engineer, geologist, zoologist, conservationist, educator, patriot and citizen.

The chronicle of his life is unique both in the annals of the university and in the realm of natural science. Professor Shimek as a zoologist found his chief interest in the study of snails, and from his original interest along these lines developed his well-known work on fossil forms for which he has long been recognized throughout the world. His study of fossil malacology gradually developed into a broad interest in the Pleistocene geology of Iowa. He published a number of papers on loess and its fossils, and he is the author of the term "Nebraskan" applied to the till sheet which underlies the Aftonian interglacial deposits. Many of Professor Shimek's highest honors came in recognition of his geological work. He was a member of the Iowa State Geological Board and in 1911 was chairman of the Geological Section and vice-president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and in 1914 he was made honorary chairman of the Geological Section of the International Scientific Congress held in Europe as a tribute to his important contributions. The Geological Society of America had awarded him a research grant in 1936.

Professor Shimek's botanical contributions were in the field of ecology in relation to prairies. He strongly championed the concept that prairies were definite associations of species with common tolerance of intense light and rapid evaporation and that their treelessness was attributable to the high summer temperatures and drying winds. His notes comprise over fifty years of meticulous, quantitative observations which have followed the transitions of Iowa and surrounding prairies from pioneer times to the year of his death. He was at work in his office a few days before his final illness overtook him, studying herbarium material and completing a report on the plant geography of Iowa. Few scholars were as able as Professor Shimek to knit together vividly and accurately the whole story of natural history. His was a life spent largely out-of-doors in direct contact with the things about which he wrote. He was known for his insistence upon study in the field and the synthesis of the entire natural environment. In 1901 Professor Shimek took his first class of students to Lake Okoboji, where in 1909 the Lakeside Laboratory was established.

Professor Shimek labored ardently in behalf of the independence of Czechoslovakia in 1918, and with his personal friend, Thomas G. Masaryk, the historian, he planned during the latter's exile in America much of the strategy which finally resulted in Czech independence and Masaryk's election as the first president of Czechoslovakia. As president of the Czechoslovakian Council of Higher Education from its very inception he contributed greatly to the establishment of American standards and ideals of higher learning in the now independent nation of his forbears. He was called to the Charles University of Prague, Bohemia, as exchange professor in botany in 1914 and was awarded the Ph.D. degree in recognition of his scientific contributions. In recognition of his patriotic services he was awarded a special Czech medal of honor in 1927. His services to the state and education were memorialized by the Iowa legislature in a unanimous resolution of tribute passed on February 1, 1937.

Professor Shimek was long a leader in the educational development of the Middle West. He served as a member of several school boards and other education organizations. He was president of the Iowa Academy of Science in 1904 and later president of the Iowa Society of Engineers. He was a member of the

Botanical Society of America, Ecological Society, Washington and Iowa Academies of Science, Sigma Xi, national and state president of the Izaak Walton League, fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Geological Society of America, Botanical Society of Bohemia and Natural History Society of Prague. His passing is an irretrievable academic and civic loss to the state. He was the last of the elder statesmen of natural history in the Middle West.

W. F. LOEHWING

WESLEY M. COATES

THE sudden death of Dr. Wesley M. Coates has greatly shocked his colleagues in the department of physics of Columbia University and the Crocker Institute. Dr. Coates's death was due to an accidental contact with the power lines of the million-volt x-ray machine at the Presbyterian Hospital. The x-ray machine was not running at the time, but certain adjustments were being made on the oscillators which feed the x-ray apparatus preparatory to its use on the following day, and the presumption is that Dr. Coates slipped and accidentally came in contact with a power circuit of about 5,000 volts. His death was presumably instantaneous, for, despite every effort by his colleague, Dr. Exner, and the staff of the Presbyterian Hospital, he could not be revived.

He had received his academic training under Professor E. O. Lawrence and David H. Sloan at the University of California and a doctorate in physics in addition. He then worked with Professor Bergen Davis in the department of physics at Columbia University for two years, and for the past year has been active with Dr. Frank M. Exner, of the Crocker Institute, in putting the finishing touches on the x-ray machine belonging to the Crocker Institute, but housed by the Presbyterian Hospital. He and Dr. Exner and Professor Charles Packard had under way a large series of experiments in the field of biophysics. Dr. Coates was a man of excellent training, had a mind of very original type, and was an enthusiastic worker. He will be greatly missed by those with whom he worked.

F. C. W.

RECENT DEATHS

DR. GEORGE H. SHERWOOD, curator-in-chief of education and honorary director of the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, died suddenly on March 19 at the age of sixty-one years.

DR. JAMES B. OVERTON, professor of plant physiology at the University of Wisconsin, died suddenly on March 18. He was sixty-seven years old.

DR. RAYMOND R. HITCHCOCK, since 1914 head of the department of mathematics of the University of North Dakota, died on March 10. He was fifty-six years old.

ROBERT WALPOLE ELLIS, professor of geology at the University of New Mexico for nineteen years and state geologist of New Mexico from 1918 to 1927, died on March 10 at the age of sixty-eight years.

DR. LOUIS BEAUFORT, for thirty years professor of surveying and geodesy at the University of Toronto until his retirement in 1931 with the title emeritus, died on March 17 at the age of seventy-six years.

DR. JOHN F. MACKEY, director of industrial work in the department of chemistry at the Central Technical School, Toronto, died on March 11 at the age of fifty-one years.

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

FOR the tenth successive time, annual attendance at the Field Museum of Natural History in 1936 exceeded one million visitors. The total number of visitors in the year was approximately 1,180,000. More than 94 per cent. were admitted free. Only about 67,000, or less than 6 per cent., paid the 25-cent admission charge required on certain days. Admission is free to the general public on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays; children, students, teachers and members of the museum are admitted free on all days.

During the school year, Chicago's 500,000 school children were kept in daily contact with the museum by means of some 1,300 traveling natural history exhibits which are circulated among the schools on regular schedule by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension department of the museum.

In the spring and autumn the annual courses of free illustrated lectures for adults were presented in the James Simpson Theater of the museum. These, and the series of free motion-picture programs for children, extension lectures in the schools, guide-lecture tours at the museum and other activities carried on by the division of the museum known as the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation, reached approximately 250,000 persons.

Exhibits in all departments were augmented by new installations. In the department of zoology is a new habitat group of the rare emperor penguins, for which specimens collected by Rear-Admiral Richard E. Byrd on his last expedition to the Antarctic were presented to the museum by the Chicago Zoological Society. Another new group shows the grotesque gelada baboons found only in Ethiopia. Of interest is an exhibit of six different species of penguins from various parts of the world, the rare tamarao buffalo found only in the island of Mindoro in the Philippines, a specimen of