

No. VIII.—**Obituary Notices : Ethel D. Currie, James Gordon**

ETHEL D. CURRIE, D.Sc., Ph.D., F.R.S.E., F.G.S., F.M.A.—
Ethel Dobbie Currie (1899-1963) dedicated her life to Geology, achieving high eminence both in administration and in research. She matched her concern for the well-being of her science with an altruism and an integrity that allowed her to give unstintedly the greatest personal assistance to fellow geologists old and young, in furtherance of their work and in the use of the collections submitted to her care.

Her whole professional career was spent in the University of Glasgow. She graduated under Professor J. W. Gregory in 1920, and after a short period as Demonstrator in his department was appointed Assistant Curator of the geological collections in the Hunterian Museum. There she had the onerous tasks of bringing into order and cataloguing the minerals, rocks, and fossils that, some going back to William Hunter's day, were the riches of nearly two hundred years' accumulation, and that were rapidly increasing in number as generations of students and researchers came and went. This office work, laborious and never-ending, was in its nature less well known to the public than it deserved to be; and visitors to the Museum were better acquainted with her through the many exhibits she prepared to illustrate various aspects of Geology, notably the instructional show-cases in petrology, mineralogy, and palaeontology, and in the illustration of evolutionary lines. In her later years, with the expert technical help of Mr. F. Munro, she took a special interest in the morphology and relations of fossil vertebrates: the exhibits she prepared, illustrated by exquisitely constructed models in supplement to actual fossils, are unique of their kind and are a witness to the meticulous accuracy and the exhaustive thoroughness of her work. She used the exhibits to effect in teaching and exposition that were not the least of her contributions as a member to the University. Her aid was also enlisted on innumerable occasions in providing information for a whole host of visitors to the Museum, whom she was quickly concerned to make welcome. Her long and devoted service was recognised by the University when she was promoted to the grade of Senior Lecturer in 1960. She retired in 1962.

Her interests in research were palaeontological. In her early

days she described, as opportunity offered, collections of fossils that came to the Museum. These included numbers of sea-urchins from overseas, and she became an authority on Mesozoic and Tertiary echinoids especially of Africa and southern Asia, publishing descriptions of faunas from Cyprus, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Kenya, Persia, Samaria, and Burma. She also described xiphosurs from Lesmahagow, Mesozoic corals from Somaliland, and even collections of rock specimens from the Silurian. Some of this work appeared in the first volumes of Monographs of the Hunterian Museum, a series she helped Professor Gregory to establish.

Later she extended her interests beyond morphology and the descriptions and recording of genera and species; and in a sequence of papers on *Promicroceras* and other Jurassic ammonites she illustrated morphogeny in cephalopods as a process revealing the effects of differential growth rates and of ontogenetic allometry. Her discernment and her technique enabled her to make notable advances in palaeontological theory that in their turn were to serve her in good stead when she began a comprehensive description of the Scottish Carboniferous goniatites. This work, which turned out to be her magnum opus, had its germs in an analysis of the fauna of Skipsey's Marine Band — a first thorough study of any Scottish Upper Carboniferous mixed fauna, published by the Society in 1937. It expanded into a detailed account of every known species and variety — almost every informative specimen — of Scottish goniatite. The formidable task was highly rewarding, for it resulted not only in an illuminating monograph on fossil types but also in a version of Carboniferous stratigraphy of major importance: Dr. Currie for the first time not only gave precision to the zonal sequence of the strata, but demonstrated the great gap in the Namurian series, delineated Lower from Upper Carboniferous, and proved that the rocks of the Calciferous Sandstone group in all their goniatitic horizons belong to the Viséan stage. She finally rounded off her work on goniatites by discussing, in her Presidential Address to the Society, ecology and habits as revealed in different shapes of shell.

Dr. Currie sustained the Society with her support for many years; and although she was modest to the point of diffidence her worth was recognised in her repeated election to the Council. Her choice as Vice-President was in natural sequence, and in

1952 she became the first woman President in the hundred years of the Society's history. The Royal Society of Edinburgh bestowed upon her a similar distinction when she became in 1949 one of the first three women ever admitted to the Fellowship — and it also recognised her high ability and the outstanding quality of her work when it awarded her the Neill Prize in 1945.

T.N.G.

JAMES GORDON.—James Gordon was born in Glasgow on 6th April, 1886, and lived in the city until his death on 18th May, 1962. About 1931 he joined his father-in-law's business in High Street and later became a member of the Incorporation of Fleshers, and thereby a Burgess of the City of Glasgow. His interest in the city led him to join the Old Glasgow Club, and to follow closely the changes recorded in their Transactions. He also became a member of the Andersonian Natural History and Microscopical Society (now the Andersonian Naturalists), and this aroused his interest in geology. He attended Dr. Tyrrell's evening classes for many years and eventually joined our Society in 1951.

James Gordon acted as joint auditor for the Society for several years and was a familiar figure at lectures and on excursions, from which he was seldom absent. His presence and his enthusiastic support for the Society will be much missed by his fellow-members.

A.F.



Ethel Dobbie Currie

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