

OBITUARY

Dr. Walther Horn (1871-1939)

IN the afternoon of the 10th July 1939, Dr. Walther Horn, Director of the Deutsches Entomologisches Institut der Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft, Berlin-Dahlem, breathed his last in his sixty-eighth year. The brief intimation of his death received by Dr. Hem Singh Pruthi, Imperial Entomologist, makes no mention of any illness but it has been evident to those, in touch with the Institute at Dahlem, that, of late, Dr. Horn had been keeping indifferent health.

Dr. Horn's contributions to entomology cover a period of nearly half a century and they are published in journals of at least three continents and in as many languages. By far the major part of his work deals with the systematics or taxonomy of Cicindelidæ, a group of insects popularly known as tiger-beetles and to the study of which he devoted practically his whole life. To-day, there will be few entomologically-known localities in the world, some part, at least, of the Cicindelid fauna of which Dr. Horn did not study, describe or record and the present knowledge of the taxonomy of this group of insects is almost exclusively based on the numerous papers contributed by him on this subject.

Essentially a systematist, Dr. Horn held very definite views on the scope and development of systematic entomology. He made no distinction between systematic and taxonomic work. If systematic entomologists could be divided into 'lumpers' and 'splitters', he certainly could not be considered to belong to the latter category. He was appalled by the number of insect species already named when probably the whole known insect fauna of the world did not exceed, in his opinion, ten per cent. of that actually existing. In an address to the Fourth International Congress of Entomology held at Ithaca in 1928, he gave forcible expression to his views on this question and, for the sake of simplifying work in future, even went so far as to suggest a tentative scheme of dividing insect taxonomy into two divisions: primary, in which the taxonomist will be concerned only up to the major groupings in a genus—"species-complexes", consisting of a number of closely-allied species grouped together, rather than species, and, secondary, in which the work will involve the

division of species-complexes into lower ranks—species, sub-species, aberrations, etc.

It will be impossible to cite here even the important papers of Dr. Horn but a reference may be made to one of his early publications in collaboration with Herr Sigmund Schenkling, who preceded him as Director of the Deutsches Entomologisches Institut. This was the revised and enlarged edition of Hagen's *Bibliotheca Entomologica*, which dealt with the world literature on entomology up to the end of 1863 to which the authors added no less than 7,929 articles not listed by Hagen, thus bringing the total of papers cited to 25,229. They also showed that 3,326 authors who had written on entomological subjects prior to 1863, had been missed in Hagen's publication. Two other notable reference publications by Dr. Horn were the volume on Carabidæ-Cicindelidæ in the series *Coleopterum Catalogus* published by Junk (1926), and volumes on Carabidæ-Cicindelidæ in *Genera Insectorum* published by Wytsman (1908-15). Dr. Horn had also been editing, in collaboration with his colleague, Dr. Hans Sachtleben, the three well-known German periodicals: (1) *Entomologische Mitteilungen*; (2) *Arbeiten über morphologische und taxonomische Entomologie*; and (3) *Entomologische Beihefte aus Berlin-Dahlem*.

Dr. Horn's views on some general questions relating to entomology were also very thought-provoking and should be more widely known. For instance, he was not a great believer in the method of applying mathematical formulæ to biological work because of the various complex factors affecting living organisms, and, hence, of the probability, that what may be sound mathematically may not always be practicable biologically. On the status and functions of an entomologist, he expressed himself very clearly. An entomologist, he said, must be determined by reference to the motive actuating his work and not merely if he happens to work on insects to elucidate problems of genetics or evolution. In other words, an entomologist is one who studies insects for their own sake and not to contribute to some other branch of the biological science.

Dr. Horn had been associated with the Deutsches Entomologisches Institut since pre-war days. He was a prominent figure at and contributed papers to, all the seven international congresses of entomology so far held. He was keenly sympathetic towards entomological organisations and workers in other parts of the world. Early in 1934, when the present writer was working at the Deutsches Entomologisches Institut, he seemed greatly concerned at a possible reduction of the staff of the Indian Museum at Calcutta, due to financial stringency, a proposal to which effect he had heard of shortly

before. 'The staff should be increased rather than decreased', he said, 'because in my opinion they are doing most useful work'. Dr. Horn was a quiet and unassuming gentleman, rather frail in figure but actively interested in entomology and entomologists, an interest which now and then came forcibly to the surface and expressed itself in a few pithy sentences. To the Indian entomologists visiting his laboratory in the picturesque village of Dahlem, his help was always as unstinted as his welcome was warm. Dr. Horn's death will be greatly regretted by entomologists all over the world. K. B. LAL.

Dr. P. N. Ghatak (1902-1939)

DR. P. N. GHATAK of the Department of Botany, Calcutta University, passed away prematurely on the 14th of July last. Dr. Ghatak was born in the year 1902 in



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the village Hashail in the district of Dacca, Bengal. He received his early education at Dacca and graduated with honours in Botany from the Presidency College, Calcutta. In the year 1927 he obtained the M.Sc. degree in Botany of the Calcutta University and worked as a Lecturer in Botany for some time in the Presidency College, Calcutta, prior to his departure for England in 1929. He started research work in Mycology at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, and was awarded the Ph.D. degree of the London University for his original investigations. He returned to India in 1933 and soon after was appointed a research assistant in the Rust Research Scheme of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research. He was appointed a member of the teaching staff of the Department of Botany, Calcutta University, in the year 1935. He organised the Department of Mycology and Plant-pathology of the University and initiated research in these subjects. He himself was employed in the study of the fungi causing damage to fruits under storage conditions.

Dr. Ghatak was a very successful teacher and was greatly loved by his students and colleagues for his amiable disposition. His death at the early age of 37 is a loss to his wide circle of friends, relatives and to the science of Botany.