

CHARLES DEPÉRET, who was born in 1854, and died on May 27th, 1929, devoted the whole of a long life, from youth up, to the service of our science.

In 1870, at the age of 16, he commenced his first important work by an investigation of the Pliocene basin of Roussillon, a region famous for the variety of its sediments—both continental and marine—and for its richness in mammalian remains. This work was not completed until 1885, when it was presented as a thesis for the Doctor's degree in Science. The hand of a master was already revealed in it.

In 1873 Depéret entered the Military School of Medicine, and passed out of it into the Army. After serving in several campaigns in Algeria, and just as he was about to receive distinguished promotion, he resigned his commission. In the following year (1889) he was appointed Professor of Geology in the University of Lyons. He proved an inspiring teacher and drew around him a band of ardent students, many of whom, becoming investigators in their turn, have enriched our science by original contributions of the first importance.

When not engaged in teaching, the Professor was hard at work pursuing his own investigations, which covered the whole field of Tertiary and Quaternary geology, both in his own country and beyond, to the west in Spain, and to the east as far as the Danube and even Egypt. Thus he reduced the confused deposits of the

Miocene to order, gave us the Vindobonian and Burdigalian stages, and rendered necessary the revision of Suess's famous work on the Mediterranean stages. In so doing, he amassed a great collection of vertebrate fossils, with which, as well as others, he enriched his University Museum, now so universally renowned. His memoirs on these fossils are models of exact description and skilful interpretation.

To the study of the glacial deposits of the Rhone he brought the same powers of acute observation and original explanation as distinguished all his work, and his latest contribution to Pleistocene geology, based on the correlation of gravel-terraces with each other and their relation to glacial deposits, has furnished stimulus to a numerous and increasing number of investigators.

Depéret was a convinced evolutionist, and a great part of his work, perhaps the greater part, was devoted to tracing the various lines of descent of the Tertiary mammalia. He was one of the first to recognize the excessive demands which this field of research makes upon the investigator; amliation of genera suggested by anatomical characters is of no value, unless it is based on a precise knowledge of their distribution in time and space. Thus the highest powers of the geologist as well as those of the taxonomist are brought into play. Fortunate the man who, like Depéret, is endowed with both.

Having arrahged the fossil mammalia in linear series of descent, Deperet found great difficulty in attaching these branches to the parent stem: they converge so gently, and so often they are broken off, not only singly, but in whole fascia-faunas.

For an explanation, he turned in the first place to migration, and made good use of it, finally suggesting that many of the missing members of a series may be in time discovered by the exploration of hitherto unsearched lands. In the next place he turned to the poverty of our data: this he did his best to diminish by his unwearied work of excavation in fossil-rich localities scattered over a wide area.

Behind all the facts of evolution there remains the appealing question—What is its cause? To this Deperet could give no answer. He recognized that it involved the cause of variation. That is fundamental. But, like our own countryman, Bateson, he confessed that no one had yet succeeded in throwing any light on this. Lamarckism, Darwinism, and Mendelism, all alike had tailed. For him the cause was still to seek.

It was while conducting an excavation in the field that Deperet

lviii PROCEEDINGS OF THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY. [vol. lxxxvi,

was struck down by the illness which was so soon to prove fatal ;
yet, after the onset of the attack. this gallant soldier in the cause
of Science for four days carried on. and then perforce succumbed.

He was a very perfect gentleman, beloved of all who knew him.

[W. J. SOLLAS.]