

John Walter Gregory, D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S.

DR JOHN WALTER GREGORY, Professor of Geology in the University of Glasgow, was drowned in the Urubamba River, at the Megantoni Rapids, on 2nd June 1932. About six months previously he had started from Britain with a small expedition which included Miss Mackinnon Wood and Messrs Coverley-Price and Landa, their object being to explore the geology of certain parts of Chili, especially with reference to changes of level, earth movements, and faulting. The other members of the party have returned in safety.

J. W. Gregory was born in London in 1864. He was the son of a wool merchant, and on leaving Stepney Grammar School studied at London University. Thereafter for a time he assisted his father in business, and paid a visit to Russia.

At the age of twenty-three he was appointed Assistant in the Geological Department of the British Museum (Natural History). Much of his time was spent in the study of fossil Bryozoa, and in 1896, 1899, and 1908 three volumes of a Catalogue of Fossil Bryozoa appeared from his pen. In 1900 he published a monograph on the Jurassic Corals of Cutch, and at various periods subsequently he made contributions to our knowledge of these groups and of the fossil Echinodermata.

In 1892 he accompanied an expedition to East Africa as scientific member. Difficulties were experienced and the project was abandoned, but Gregory, with great courage and perseverance, fitted out a small party and completed a journey which yielded notable scientific results. His journey to Mount Kenya involved the passage through the Masai country, then in a very unsettled condition. On his return he published his volume on the Great Rift Valley, which is still the best known and most readable of his travel books. At a much later period he again visited East Africa, and his theories of the structure and history of that province have received much attention from geographers and geologists.

In 1896 he accompanied Sir Martin Conway to Spitzbergen. In 1900 he was appointed Professor of Geology at Melbourne. Two years later he became Director of the Geological Survey of Victoria. During his stay in Australia he led an expedition to Lake Eyre, and devoted much attention to questions of artesian water-supply, which were discussed in a fascinating

manner in his book *The Dead Heart of Australia*. He also visited Tasmania, and published a valuable report on the copper deposits of Mount Lyell.

In 1904 he became Professor of Geology in the University of Glasgow, but he did not cease to travel widely and visited many quarters of the globe to study problems of general and of economic geology. Among these we may mention Cyrenaica, Angola, India, Canada, Rhodesia, the Transvaal, the West Indies, and Chinese Tibet. As he had a fluent pen and a wide knowledge of the varied aspects of his subject his travels furnished him with the materials of a vast number of original papers which are estimated to amount to over two hundred and fifty. Among his most important and famous contributions we may instance his papers on the gold deposits of the Rand, the nickel mines of Canada, and the copper deposits of Germany; but, though a practical geologist of great renown, he was also intensely devoted to the study of the larger questions of geology and geomorphology, and in this he was an apt disciple of Professor Suess, whose theories had much influence on Gregory at an early period in his geological career. His work on the Rift Valleys is an example of this, and we may quote also his support of the "tetrahedral" theory of the earth, his studies of the tectonics of Asia, and his luminous addresses to the Geological Society of London on the history of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

As became a skilled and philosophic geographer he interested himself also in problems of social development, and this aspect of his work is reflected in his books *The Menace of Colour*, *Human Migration and the Future*, and *The Story of the Road*, a study of the development of communications.

Gregory was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1901. In 1919 he was awarded the Bigsby Medal of the Geological Society of London and the Victoria Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, in 1922 the Gold Medal of the Scottish Geographical Society and the Gallois Medal of the Société Géographique de Paris, in 1924 the Keith Medal of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He was Honorary LL.D. of the Universities of Glasgow and Liverpool, President of the Geological Society of London 1928-1930, and presided over Section C (Geology) of the British Association in 1907 and also in the Centenary Meeting in London in 1931. He was also President of Section E (Geography) in 1924.

Few geologists have exhibited a wider range of accomplishments than J. W. Gregory. He had made valuable contributions to every department of his subject. His vast knowledge, acquired not only from very diligent reading but also from extensive travel, made him a very conspicuous figure

among British geologists. Although he did not seem robust he was most energetic, and his courage and perseverance never failed. As a teacher he was both competent and popular, and by his teaching and example he encouraged many young men to follow in his footsteps. His tragic death has removed from the scene one of the most fascinating and inspiring personalities of the British scientific world.

He was elected a Fellow of this Society in 1905.

J. S. F.