OBITUARY

SIR LEWIS LEIGH FERMOR

WITH the passing away of Sir Lewis Leigh Fermor, Kt., O.B.E., D.Sc., A.R.S.M., F.R.S., F.G.S., M.I.M.M., F.N.I., F.A.S.B., one of the most illustrious geologists who have worked in this country and whose death took place on the 26th May, 1954, at his new home at Woking, Surrey, England, Indian geology has lost one of its best exponents and architects. He worked actively for over a third of a century in India and contributed substantially to the building up of geological knowledge on various aspects of Indian geology. The void created by the loss will be difficult to fill as, in this age of specialisation, it will be exceedingly difficult for any individual to cover such a vast field as he has done.

Sir L. L. Fermor was born in London, on 18th September, 1880. After his school education at Wilson's Grammar School at Camberwell, London, he won a scholarship and entered the Royal School of Mines for studies in metallurgy. He won the first place in the First Class in the Associateship Examination of the Royal School of Mines in metallurgy in 1901 and was awarded the Murchison Medal for his proficiency. Later he took the B.Sc. Degree of London University by research and in 1909, after a few years of service in the Geological Survey of India, the D.Sc. Degree of the same University for his work on the manganese ore deposits of India. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1934 in recognition of his many contributions to Indain geology.

After taking his Degree in the Royal School of Mines, he applied for a post in the Geological Survey of India and was selected in 1902 by a committee which included a well-known name in Indian geology, namely, W. T. Blanford. Though the training of Fermor was essentially in metallurgy, it was broad enough in those days for him to take to geology as his profession and make a great success of it. Within eight years of his joining the service during which time he was associated with such well-known geologists as T. H. Holland, C. S. Middlemiss and H. H. Hayden, he was promoted to the grade of Superintendent. On various occasions between 1922 and 1930 he officiated as Director. On the retirement of Sir Edwin Pascoe in 1930 he was appointed permanent Director and continued in that post till 1935 when he retired on superannuation and was knighted by the Government of India for his distinguished services.

During the period of his Directorship, Fermor had to face the drastic retrenchment which overtook the scientific services in India in the early thirties. He fought hard to save the Department from serious retrenchment, but though he did not succeed to his satisfaction, the Department was nevertheless left with a nucleus which could carry on some of the functions of the Geological Survey till better times came.

Fermor's major interest was in Archæan geology and in igneous and metamorphic rocks. The greater part of his field work was devoted to the study of Archæan rocks in various parts of India, largely in connection with his monumental work on the manganese ore deposits. At a later date he started the detailed mapping of parts of the Chhindwara District in the Central Provinces, but the only publication which resulted from this was part of his treatise on the Archæans of India. His work on the manganese ore bodies which occupied six or seven years of the earliest part of his career was published in a monograph of four parts which appeared in 1909 as Volume 37 of the *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India*. This established him as an authority on the manganese ores of India, for this treatise still holds the field and it will take many years to revise it and bring it up-to-date. This and his subsequent papers bear testimony to the accuracy of his observations, and to the enormous pains he was capable of taking both in the field and in the laboratory. Numerous younger officers have had the opportunity of being associated with him in their work on Archæan geology and all will to testify to his great industry, patience and meticulous care bestowed on observations. The study of the Deccan Traps led him to some important speculations concerning the interior of the earth and particularly about the existence of a layer of basic and ultra-basic rocks which might change their properties as a result of the conditions to which they are subjected at a depth of several miles from the surface.

Fermor's field studies included also the examination of the copper deposits of Singhbhum and of Sikkim; the chromite deposits of Singhbhum and Baluchistan; the coal deposits of the Korea and Bokaro coalfields; the iron ores