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## Obituary.

SIR BALDWIN SPENCER, 1860-1929.

The death of Sir Baldwin Spencer, K.C.M.G., F.R.S., Emeritus Professor of Biology in the University of Melbourne, removes one of the outstanding figures of Australian science.

Walter Baldwin Spencer was born at Stretford, Lancashire, England, in 1860, and was educated at Owen's College, Manchester, and Exeter College, Oxford. After acting as assistant to the Linacre Professor of Human and Comparative Anatomy at Oxford University, he came to Australia in 1887 as Professor of Biology in the University of Melbourne, from which position he retired in 1919. After his arrival in this country he devoted himself enthusiastically to the study of the fauna and the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia, and a long series of original papers and works testifies to the zeal and success with which he prosecuted his researches.

His zoological articles cover a wide range of subjects. He made important researches on earthworms, contributed several papers on the pineal eye in the lizards, and on the anatomy of the Queensland lungfish. On the marsupials and monotremes he published several papers, and described *Wynyardia bassiana*, the oldest known Australian marsupial, found fossil in the Table Cape beds, Tasmania. To him we owe the first description of some new species of marsupials.

In 1884 he accompanied the Horn Expedition to Central Australia, subsequently acting as editor of the Reports to which he contributed the narrative and several of the zoological articles. Apparently his interest in anthropology arose out of his experiences on this expedition, to which also we are no doubt indebted for his fruitful association with the late F. J. Gillen in the study of the natives of the interior. From this period until the close of his busy life Spencer devoted himself more and more to the subject of

ethnology, and his work in this branch of science is probably better known than his contributions to zoology.

In 1899 he collaborated with Gillen, a postal official stationed in Central Australia, and a sound ethnologist, in publishing *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*. In 1902 the two partners crossed Australia from south to north, publishing the results of their observations in *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904) and *Across Australia* (1912). In 1912 he was appointed Special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, from which resulted *The Native Tribes of the Northern Territory*. In 1928 appeared *Wanderings in Wild Australia*,\* which gives a more popular account of the inhospitable but intensely interesting regions of Central Australia, its animals and human inhabitants.

In 1927 he left Australia for London in order to superintend the publication of his work *Arumia*, and while there he joined an expedition which sailed from Liverpool to conduct researches into the history and customs of the primitive Patagonians. He died at Ushuaia, Argentine, in the end of July, 1929.

Besides being eminent as a zoologist and ethnologist, Spencer had a good knowledge of art, and was a discriminating collector of pictures. He himself was no mean artist, and many of his works are illustrated by his own hand.

Spencer took a leading part in scientific societies and institutions, and for many years was a trustee of the Public Library, Art Gallery and Museum of Victoria, and Honorary Director of the National Museum, Melbourne.

C. A.

\*Reviewed in THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM MAGAZINE, VOL. III, No. 10, April-June, 1929, p. 339.

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