

Naturalist with most delicate and accurate

perception

By Anna Black

title page of "Birds of Jamaica."

The books Gosse himself wrote, the books his son wrote about him, all serve to give a picture of a remarkable man and one to whom everybody who is thrilled and enchanted by the sight of a bird or a butterfly, a sea shell or a snake, should remember with gratitude.

—Anna Black

PHILIP HENRY Gosse, for whom the Gosse Bird Clubs are named, was in Jamaica under two years and yet he produced three wonderful books as the result of his stay here: "Birds of Jamaica", "Illustrations of the Birds of Jamaica", and "A Naturalist's Sojourn in Jamaica".

He was a man who understood so well the delight of watching living things, the endless fascination and beauty of them and could write of them with the most delicate and accurate perception. Today we are very apt to forget how wonderful these things are, very apt to destroy and neglect them.

It is perhaps true to say that Gosse was not very interested in people and not a very shrewd observer of them, nor of himself. His son tells "When I was a child, I was for ever begging him to draw me 'a man' but he could never be tempted to do it. 'No!', he would say, 'a humming bird is much nicer, or a shark or a zebra. I will draw you a zebra.'"

He was a person whose religious convictions were extremely strong all his life, indeed at one time he considered becoming a Wesleyan minister. He was much impressed by the beliefs of the Moravians, with whom he came in contact during his stay in Jamaica. He eventually became an ardent member of the Plymouth Brethren. It is said that his religious beliefs were responsible for the eventual break with his son who followed the teaching of Charles Darwin.

Evangelical spirit

HIS son who wrote a very fine life of his father and a very touching book, it is called "Father and Son", wrote: "This book is the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs. It ended, as was inevitable, in disruption." Gosse was a contemporary of Darwin but his evangelical spirit simply could not accept Darwin's beliefs.

Gosse was not a particularly strong man and had bouts of violent headaches and sickness all his life, including one at Bluefields. After this attack he went on a brief trip to Kingston where he met one of the most outstanding Jamaicans of the time, Richard Hill. Richard Hill and Gosse had exchanged letters on birds and natural history and it was to Hill that he remained greatly indebted, constantly referring to him in his books and even including his name on the



PHILIP HENRY GOSSE.
Author of "The Birds of Jamaica".

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