Obituary Notice

ERNST ALBERT GÄUMANN, 1893–1963

Professor Gäumann died on 6 December 1963, two months after his seventieth birthday. He had been presented on that occasion with a Jubilee booklet containing messages and recollections of earlier days from colleagues and former pupils from many countries; it is impossible to read that booklet without getting a vivid and unforgettable impression of the immense influence which he had on all who met him. With his death we lost a great mycologist, a leader of men, a man with a highly personal genius, and a genial if sometimes provocative conversationalist.

For almost forty years he was head of the world-famous Institut für spezielle Botanik der eidgenössischen technischen Hochschule, Zürich. Despite heavy administrative and teaching duties, both of which he took very seriously, throughout his life he carried on his own personal research, and encouraged that of his students and associates, with an almost unbelievable vigour.

The breadth of his mycological interests is shown by the books he wrote. He produced a succession of books on the morphology and taxonomy of fungi, all of which are still of great value to students and specialists; these include *Vergleichende Morphologie der Pilze* (1926), *Die Pilze* (1949) and *Die Pilze, Grundzüge ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte und Morphologie* (1952). His works on special groups include one of the downy mildews. *Beiträge zu einer Monographie der Gattung Peronospora Corda* (1923), and the exhaustive, 1400-page long *Die Rostpilze Mitteleuropas* (1959), dealing with taxonomy, morphology, life-history and pathological significance of the European rusts.

In later years he devoted himself more and more to plant pathology. He felt that plant pathology had hitherto tended to be a mere collection of facts—of the kind ‘this pathogen causes this disease of the following plants’—and that the time had come to make it a real science, dealing in general terms with problems of epidemiology, processes of infection and the biochemistry and physiology of host–parasite interactions. This generalized approach was first apparent in a book which he wrote as a young man in collaboration with his teacher, Professor Eduard Fischer: *Biologie der pflanzenbewohnenden parasitischen Pilze* (1929); it reached its final form in his *Pflanzliche Infektionslehre* (1946). This book can justly be claimed to have influenced the subsequent development of plant pathology in all countries; there is much in it with which one can disagree but as a stimulus to thought and experiment it is unsurpassed.

During the last twenty years, in collaboration with chemist colleagues in Zürich, he developed an active research group on phytotoxic metabolites of parasitic fungi and on antibiotics. Their work on lycomarasmin, fusaric acid and other phytotoxins and their relation to the etiology of wilt diseases was the forerunner of many similar investigations elsewhere, and opened up an important new field of investigation.

Gäumann received many honorary doctorates and other academic honours. He was an honorary or corresponding member of no fewer than 28 learned societies and academies. We in the Society for General Microbiology elected him an Honorary Member in 1959, and are proud that he was one of us.

P. W. BRIAN