

PROFESSOR THOMAS CROXEN ARCHER. By J. D. Marwick,
LL.D.

Thomas Croxen Archer, Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, was born in Northamptonshire in 1817, and was educated in London as a surgeon. When about twenty-five years of age, however, he received an appointment in the Import Department of the Customs at Liverpool, and in that service he remained, receiving successive promotions, till 1856. Having a natural taste for botany, which he had zealously cultivated as a branch of his medical studies, Mr Archer took a keen scientific interest in all the vegetable imports of Liverpool, and when the authorities of that city were invited by the promoters of the Great Exhibition of 1851 to contribute to its success, and were puzzled to know how best to do so, Mr Archer proposed a scheme which met with universal acceptance. His suggestion was that Liverpool should be represented by a complete and systematically arranged collection of specimens of all the mineral, animal, and vegetable importations into the Mersey, and this scheme was admirably carried into effect under his own direction. He was subsequently invited to write one of the official reports on the Exhibition. The services rendered by him in connection with this collection, and also as agent in Liverpool for the Exhibition, were recognised by a medal; and in the following year he was appointed agent in Liverpool for the Crystal Palace Company, who marked their sense of the value of his work for it during 1852-3 by conferring three medals upon him. In the latter of these years Mr Archer contributed a volume on "Economic Botany" to a series of popular works on Natural History published by Lowell, Reeve, & Co., of London. About this time Sir William Hooker was forming the great museum of Economic Botany at Kew, and had much correspondence on the subject with Mr Archer, who afterwards set himself, with characteristic energy, to make a somewhat similar, though smaller, collection for the Royal Institution at Liverpool. His interest in botany also attracted him to the Botanic Gardens of the city, in which he took an active concern, and led to many excursions in the neighbouring counties,

in the pursuit of his favourite study. He was appointed Lecturer on Botany in the Medical School at Liverpool, and afterwards Professor of Botany in Queen's College and in Blackburn College of the same city.

On 10th May 1860, Mr Archer became Director of the Edinburgh Industrial Museum, a name which was subsequently, by order of the Committee of Council on Education, changed into that of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. The office had become vacant by the death of Professor George Wilson, who had done much, by the charm of his persuasive advocacy, to commend the objects of the museum to the public. But the state of his health, and the want of any suitable building in which the necessary collections could be exhibited, prevented much progress being made. Shortly after Mr Archer's appointment, however, the requisite steps were taken by the Government to proceed with the erection of a suitable museum, and in 1861 the foundation stone of the present building was laid by the lamented Prince Consort. To all the work connected with that ceremony—with the subsequent completion of the structure—with the transference to it of the collection made by Professor George Wilson, and also of his own private collection of upwards of two hundred specimens, chiefly of vegetable products used in the Arts—and with the supplementing and completing of these collections, Mr Archer devoted himself with untiring energy. What written appeals did not succeed in obtaining for the museum, personal solicitation at the various centres of industry rarely failed to secure. The enthusiasm of the director carried everything before it, and year after year he went over various countries in Europe, visiting important seats of manufacture and noteworthy art collections, and carrying back with him, as purchases or free gifts, the results of his untiring labours to enrich the museum at Edinburgh or South Kensington. When the eastern wing of the present building was completed, everything that Mr Archer could do to hasten on the extension of the central portion was done, and when the central portion was completed, no effort on his part was spared to induce the Government to complete the entire structure by the erection of the west wing now in progress. This he had the satisfaction of seeing commenced. In the arrangement and classification of the museum, as it now exists, and in the

completeness with which every exhibit is made to tell its own story to the student, there remains, and will, it is to be hoped long remain, the evidence of Mr Archer's loving care and devotion to his work.

Mr Archer was appointed one of the jurors of the International Exhibition of 1862, and, along with Mr Peterson of the office of Crown Domains in St Petersburg, wrote an official report on the vegetable substances used in manufactures shown at that Exhibition. His services in relation to this work were acknowledged by a medal; and in the following year he was appointed a Corresponding Member of the Ministry of Crown Domains of Russia. He acted as Associate Commissioner at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867, and reported on the class of exhibits connected with forest products, for which report he received three medals. In 1870 he reported on the International Exhibition in London; and in 1871 he was commissioned by the British Government to attend the Exhibition at Moscow and Copenhagen. He was appointed a member of the Committee for Selection of the annual International Exhibition of 1872, for which Exhibition also he acted as Deputy Commissioner for Scotland. In 1873 he was appointed a juror at the Vienna Exhibition held in that year, and he prepared several reports for the British Commission in connection with it. His services at this Exhibition were acknowledged by the decoration of a Commander of the Order of Franz-Joseph of Austria. In the same year he was awarded the gold medal of the Russian Ministry of Crown Domains; and, in recognition of literary and scientific merit, was appointed Chevalier of the Order of St Hiago of Portugal. In 1876 Mr Archer was appointed Executive Commissioner for Great Britain and Ireland, along with Colonel Sandford, at the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876, and in recognition of this service he was awarded a medal. In 1878 he acted as one of the jurors in the Paris Universal Exhibition of that year.

Mr Archer was connected with many literary and scientific societies. He was a director of the Royal Institution of Liverpool, a life member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, an honorary member of the Liverpool Chemists' Association, a member of the Liverpool Microscopical Society (of which he was for several years secretary), an honorary member of the Birkenhead

Philosophical Society, a president of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh, a member of Council of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and a member of the Royal Society Club, a president of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts, a secretary of the Edinburgh Microscopical Society, an honorary member of the Edinburgh Geological Society, a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, an honorary president of the Edinburgh Association of Science and Art, an honorary member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, and an honorary member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Austria, the Philosophical Society of America, Philadelphia, and the Franklin Institute of Pennsylvania.

He was a liberal contributor to the *Transactions* of the various literary and philosophical societies with which he was connected, to the *Art Journal*, and *Journal of the Society of Arts*, to the eighth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, to *Chambers's Encyclopædia*, and to other works.

Called frequently to London on the business of his Department, Mr Archer had occasion to be there in February 1885, and had arranged to return to Edinburgh on the 19th of that month. Two of his daughters had joined him in the Midland Grand Hotel, and were proceeding to breakfast, intending afterwards to accompany him to the railway station, when, without premonition of any kind, he fell down in the hall and expired. He was predeceased in 1879 by his wife, and is survived by one son and four daughters. His eldest son and a daughter predeceased him.

Mr Archer was a man of great energy of character, and of wide and varied information. Throughout life he enjoyed exceptional facilities for becoming acquainted with an infinite variety of men and things in this country and abroad, and these facilities he utilised to the fullest extent. His retentive memory supplied him with inexhaustible sources of interesting conversation, and—underlying occasional apparent sharpness of manner—there were unflinching kindness, a high sense of honour, and, to those who knew him best, a depth and tenderness of feeling which were irresistibly attractive.

The writer of the present notice enjoyed Mr Archer's friendship for five-and-twenty years. He had the privilege of accompanying him in travels abroad, and enjoying his close friendship at home, and

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the result of that long and intimate knowledge entitles him to say that no more faithful public servant, no truer or more reliable friend, could be desired than Mr Archer was.

P.S.—Since this notice was prepared the writer has had placed in his hands the following letter from Colonel Donnelly, the secretary of the Science and Art Department, to Mr Archer's son :—

Science and Art Department.

3rd March 1886.

SIR,—The Lords of Committee of Council on Education have directed me to convey to you and the other members of his family their sense of the loss which has been sustained by the Science and Art Department by the death of Professor Archer.

My Lords deeply regret losing so valuable an officer; and, in desiring me to express their condolence with those who are mourning for him, have instructed me to place on record their appreciation of the exceptional zeal, energy, and ability with which he at all times discharged the important duties intrusted to him at the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art.

They consider that it was mainly owing to his exertions that this Museum, which may almost be said to have been created by him, attained such popularity and importance since it was opened to the public under his direction in 1860.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed) W. D. DONNELLY.

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Place, Edinburgh.