

## In Memoriam.

### THE LATE MR. ALEX. MORTON.

The news of the death of Mr. Alexander Morton, Director of the Tasmanian Museum, will be received with regret by the public of Tasmania, to whom his name has long been a household word, as also by scientific workers throughout Australia, by whom he was held in high esteem. Mr. Morton died shortly before noon on Monday, May 27, 1907, at Whitminster Lodge Private Hospital, Sandy Bay, near Hobart, Tasmania, of which he had been an inmate for some weeks. The immediate cause of death was heart disease.

Born at Hardtimes Landing, Louisiana, about fifty-two years ago, the son of a planter, Mr. Morton, while yet a boy, migrated with his father to Queensland. Morton senior invested what capital he possessed in a sugar plantation, but died before he had time to bring his enterprise to a successful issue. In consequence of his father's death, Alex. Morton, who was still young, was thrown entirely upon his own resources; he had to begin life at the foot of the ladder. For a time, in colloquial phrase, he roughed it; he gained a livelihood by the means he found most ready to hand, and at one period served as a seaman before the mast. Subsequently the experience gained in his younger days became invaluable to him: for it fitted him, as no other training could, for the missions which he was selected to undertake by the Council of the Sydney Museum and other scientific bodies. Having joined the staff of the Sydney Museum, he rose rapidly in the estimation of the Council, and of the Curator (Mr. Ramsay); and when it was decided to send an exploring party to New Guinea, to the remote parts of Queensland, and to the Andaman Islands, he was chosen for the work, and discharged his commission in a manner which gave general satisfaction. He visited places which had not previously been explored by a scientific collector, a fact which gives some of his records a unique value. In the course of time Mr. Morton came to hold a high position in the Sydney Museum, and when the directorship of the Tasmanian Museum became vacant, about 23 years ago, he offered himself for the post. The Royal Society, in view of his favourable recom-

mendation by the authorities of the sister institution in New South Wales, unhesitatingly appointed him. That the Royal Society was exceptionally happy in its choice has long been universally admitted. The Tasmanian Museum in its present magnitude and completeness is of Mr. Morton's creation. He revised the classification of the collection of specimens which he found on taking charge of the institution; and not only did he revise it, but he added to and increased it very materially. His object was not merely to make the Museum a place where the curious might gratify a taste for novelty but a school for the instruction of both local people and visiting scientists. His scheme of classification enabled the inquirer to view the natural history of the whole island, as it were, in miniature. Besides being a Curator of all-round capacity, there were some departments of his work to which he devoted particular attention, and in which he achieved notable success. In ornithology and ichthyology he made original researches, and materially improved the collections of specimens illustrative of these branches of natural history. Mr. Morton did not profess to be a connoisseur of art, but with the means at his disposal he did his best to get together a collection of pictures worthy of the city. His success in securing works of art on loan was remarkable; indeed, he succeeded when no one else would think of making an attempt. As secretary of the Royal Society, he discharged his duties with the same abounding energy, and to him must be assigned in a large measure the credit of having maintained public interest in its discussions. And while he was ever ready to put his own shoulder to the wheel, he possessed in a rare degree the faculty of enlisting the services of all whom he thought capable of assisting. If an eminent scientist visited the city, the public never waited long to learn that Mr. Morton had induced him to give the Royal Society the benefit of his special knowledge. There was another institution, the Science Conference, in which Mr. Morton interested himself, and on behalf of which he worked with characteristic vigour. It benefited largely by his

powers of organisation, and at critical times in its history he was largely instrumental in preserving its existence.

Reference has already been made to some of Mr. Morton's scientific expeditions. It remains to speak of one or two more. Some years ago he was commissioned by the Western Australian Government to make a collection of the minerals of that State. This he did in a manner at once successful and satisfactory to those concerned; and, thanks to the generosity of the Western Australian Government, the Tasmanian Museum was enriched by large additions to its geological departments. Another commission which he undertook and successfully performed was the importation of fish from Canada. During the Canadian winter he worked night and day, and it is not improbable that the over-exertion then undergone contributed to his breakdown in health. His activity was by no means confined to the Museum. He was Director of the Botanical Gardens, Secretary of the Domain Committee, and a member of the Fisheries Commission. In these several capacities he laboured with his wonted energy and ability. He was one of the oldest and most useful members of the Southern Tasmanian Agricultural Society, and assisted very materially in bringing that organisation up to its present prosperous condition. Other societies benefited by his industry and enthusiasm; in fact, wherever there was good work to be done for the public or for any scientific or benevolent object, there Mr. Morton was to be found, and in his own way always undertaking a large portion of the work.

Of Mr. Morton one who knew him intimately says:—"He was a warm and loyal friend. If a man was ill he would be willing to watch by his bed all night, even though he scarcely knew him. No man was more tender than he was, and of all the men I ever knew, none was more affectionate and loyal."

The deceased gentleman leaves a widow and family of three daughters and one son.

The interment of his mortal remains took place at the Cornelian Bay Cemetery on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> ult. There was a large gathering of sorrowing friends.

The funeral of the late Mr. Alexander Morton, whose remains were buried in the cemetery at Cornelian Bay on the

29<sup>th</sup> May, 1907, was one of the most representative that has ever been witnessed in Hobart. The flags at the public and leading private offices, including those of the S.T.A. and P. Society, were at half-mast, out of respect to one who had done so much for the community among whom his lot was cast. For the deceased had not only been Director of the Museum for a great number of years, but had taken an interest in, and had been personally associated with, so many other institutions of a scientific and general character, each of which sent at least one representative to pay the last sad testimony of respect, that the gathering at the grave was typical of Hobart from almost every point of view. The beautifully ornamented coffin of polished wood, with silver decorations, was almost hidden beneath a mass of floral wreaths, mute symbols of a sympathy that was universally felt. There were wreaths "from his wife and family," from the nurses at Whitminster Lodge, who had soothed his last sad hours; from the Trustees of the Museum, also from Messrs. J. and L. Arnold, and Stanley, of the same institution; from Mr. A. G. Webster, chairman of the Royal Society, and another from the Council of the same; from Lebrona, Holebrook, the residence of the Webster family; from Mr. E. Hawson, chairman of the committee of the S.T.A. and P. Society; from Mr. R. M. Johnston, I.S.O., who had long been the deceased's particular friend; from Mr. J. Wardman, of the Botanic Gardens, of which the deceased had been the director from Colonel Legge; from the president and members of the Hamilton Society; from the committee of the Arts and Crafts Society, in whose work the deceased took the greatest interest; from the W.M., officers, and brethren of the Tasmania Union Lodge; from the members of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club, to which the deceased had rendered valuable assistance in many ways: from the Tourist Association from Mr. G. A. Webster, M.B.; from Mr. W. P. Taylor and family from "Marie, with love and deep sympathy," and last, but assuredly not least, "from his little friend, Eric Waugh."

The funeral cortege left the Museum shortly after 2.30 p.m. There were a large number of carriages, the first containing the chief mourners — Master Morton, the deceased's only son, and Mr.

C. Westbrook, his son-in-law, with whom were Mr. A. G. Webster and Mr. R. M. Johnston, I.S.O. The Governor's carriage followed next, His Excellency being represented by Mr. George Browne, I.S.O., private secretary. The following gentlemen were also present: — The Acting Premier (Hon. W. B. Propsting, M.L.C.), and the Minister of Lands (Hon. Alec. Hean); the Speaker of the Assembly (Mr. J. G. Davies, C.M.G.), Messrs. A. G. Webster, Bernard Shaw, I.S.O.; R. M. Johnston, I.S.O., F.L.S.; Thos. Stephens, M.A., F.G.S.; Russell Young and Colonel W. V. Legge, R.A. (trustees of the Museum); Sir Elliott Lewis, K.C.M.G.; Judge Clark; Bishop Delany, and Revs. M. W. Gilleran and P. R. Hennebry; Canon Shoobridge (representing Bishop Mercer); Messrs. A. Reid (Under Treasurer), J. K. Reid (Clerk of the House of Assembly), who also represented the kirk session of St. Andrew's; and E. C. Nowell, I.S.O. (Clerk of the Legislative Council); Senator Mulcahy; the Mayor (Alderman C. D. Haywood) and Aldermen A. Crisp, G. Kerr, and H.

T. Gould; the Solicitor-General (Mr. E. D. Dobbie); Hons. W. H. Burgess, Arthur Morrisby, M.L.C., and Stafford Bird, M.H.A.; Captain A. C. Parker (representing the Commandant); the Surveyor-General (Mr. E. A. Counsel); Rev. G. W. Sharp; Messrs. E. Hawson (chairman of committee), Leslie Murdoch (secretary), and members of the S.T.A. and P. Society; Mr. A. Wertheimer (secretary) and members of the Tourist Association; Mr. J. E. C. Lord (Commissioner of Police); Drs. E. L. Crowther, M.H.A., Gregory Sprott (City Health Officer), G. H. Butler, M.L.C., E. J. Crouch, E. W. J. Ireland, and A. H. Clarke; Mr. J. Wardman, Colonel Warner, etc.

The cortege drove up Elizabeth-street to the cemetery at Cornelian Bay, where the deceased's remains were laid to rest. The Rev. James Barr, of St. Andrew's Church, in accordance with the expressed desire of the deceased, conducted the funeral service, which was of the simplest character. The funeral arrangements were in the hands of Messrs. A. Clark and Son.

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