

OBITUARY.

THOMAS JAMES CROUCH.

One of the pioneers of the temperance movement has passed away, indeed, in this instance it is he who for years past has been recognised as the father of the Temperance Alliance of Tasmania, who has been called from the scene of his labours. The news that Mr. Thomas James Crouch, our much respected citizen, had died at his son's residence, Collins-street, Hobart, on Thursday, May 29, 1890, was received in town with widespread expressions of regret, and sympathy with his family in their bereavement. The occurrence came as a thorough surprise, seeing that only an hour before his demise the deceased gentleman had presided over the 34th annual meeting of the Temperance Alliance, and appeared in good health. Could he have selected his last public duty it is certain his choice would have fallen upon some work connected with the cause for whose welfare he was so indefatigable a worker. He has left behind him a record of moderation of principles, allied with steady unswerving adherence to its chief actuary element that may well form the subject of imitation on the part of those who are left behind to carry forward the noble work.

Thomas James Crouch was born in London on October 22, 1805, and was the eldest son of James Crouch and Sarah Marston, his wife. His father, although by no means a rich man, was a Freeman of the City, and was always regarded by those acquainted with him with deep respect. Thomas was a lad of delicate constitution, therefore his educational training had to be conducted under certain climatic circumstances, and for this purpose he shortly following the death of his mother in 1814, and the re-marriage of his father at an early subsequent period, was sent to Worthing, a small coastal town in Sussex, where it was hoped the sea bathing would have a beneficial effect. At a later period he removed to Barmouth, in North Wales, and at the close of 1816 returned to the metropolis, being an eye-witness of the celebrations of the victory of Waterloo and the Proclamation of Peace which followed. During the year 1819 he entered the office of Mr. D. Davies, a solicitor, in Crossley-square, and remained in that employ until some years later, when he was offered a junior clerkship on the staff of the first Sheriff of this colony. While in this office he became acquainted with the now Sir Alfred Stephens, which friendship continued ever since. He accepted this, and in September, 1824, set sail for what was then known as Van Diemen's Land, in company with his chief, Mr. Dudley Fereday, aboard the Phoenix, E. Dixon, commander, arriving in the land of his adoption in the January following. The voyage was not an unusually lengthy one, those being the days when passengers received plenty of sailing for their money—no short cuts permitted, and ocean steamers a thing unknown. Only a brief period was allowed the new-comer to acquaint himself with his fresh surroundings, as, on the 1st February following he entered upon his duties at a salary of £90 a year and rations, and evinced such an aptitude for, and care in the discharge of, these that he received gradual promotion, until, in 1836 (June 11), he was appointed Under-Sheriff of the colony, which post he filled until May, 1858, when he retired upon a well-earned pension amounting to £367 10s. During his official career he experienced many stirring episodes, but it is remarkable as evincing a trait in his character, that the whole of his period of service was spent in the one department; that he was during that period only absent from the colony on one occasion—when he visited his eldest son, a Melbourne resident, and during 23 years made only two visits to Launceston. He was rarely absent from his office, except when called therefrom by departmental business, and his constant attendance, strict attention to duty, and urbanity gained for him the respect and confidence alike of his superiors in office and those of the public with whom he was brought in contact. He was a Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Tasmania, appointed under the old Act 5 William IV., No. 16, the surviving Commissioner thereunder being Mr. John Whiteford, of Launceston. Many solicitors now practising in Hobart will remember when, as articled clerks, they were invariably treated with courtesy by Mr. Crouch when taking affidavits before him, or having interviews with him officially. His son, Mr. T. J. Crouch, junr., was a well-known architect in Melbourne, where he died recently. To those who enjoyed the privilege of an intimate acquaintance with the deceased, and to the members of his family, he would recount the stirring scenes in the history of the colony of which he had been an eye-witness, and in which he had participated, either officially or in private capacity. In 1826 he was present at the execution of Matthew Brady, the noted bushranger, and who terrorised the island by his atrocities. It was the custom at executions in that period for the Sheriff to attend the gaol in great state, marching in procession, attended by his officers and jailer men, and personally witnessing the carrying out of the extreme penalty of the law. In the capture of Martin Cash Mr. Crouch took an active part. He was then residing in Brisbane-street, and hearing cries of

"Stop thief," and "Stop Martin Cash," ran into the street and followed the outlaw, who was making for the Domain, and would soon have distanced his pursuers had he not been encountered first by Constable Winstanley, whom he shot, and then by a little Irishman, an expert wrestler, who tripped him and fell upon him. Cash had thrown aside the pistol he had used against the constable, and had also fired a second when crossing Argyle-street, the shot from which carried away the nose of one of his pursuers, and the burning wad from which Mr. Crouch kicked against when taking part in the pursuit. It was owing to his interference that Cash was not beaten to death with his own horse-pistols, as he offered to search the prisoner, and was allowed to take possession of the weapons. Great excitement prevailed, and the bushranger's captors were ill-inclined to risk the escape of their prisoner, and determined to see him locked in gaol, they secured the services of a magistrate, and forming a Court of Petty Sessions, formally committed him. Mr. Crouch attended all executions that took place at Hobart or Oatlands from 1825 till the date of his resignation, and acquaintance with some very revolting scenes was entailed. Educated in the principles of the Anglican Episcopal Church, on his arrival in the colony he identified himself with the Church of St. David's, of which the Rev. Wm. Bedford (afterwards Dr. Bedford) was incumbent. Occasionally, however, he attended with some of his *compagnons de voyage*, the services conducted by the Rev. Ralph Mansfield, Wesleyan minister, in a weatherboard building situated on the banks of the Hobart Rivulet, near where the Bird-in-Hand Hotel now stands. The rapid increase in membership quickly necessitated the provision of more extended church accommodation, and the erection of the building now known as the Mechanics' Institute was proceeded with, and indeed called into service before it was complete. Sabbath School work had always presented great attractions for Mr. Crouch, and his interest in the school attached to the Wesleyan Church led to his severing his connection with the Established Church, and joining the Wesleyan in March, 1826. In June, 1832, he was elected one of the trustees, and continued to hold office until his death. The present building was erected in the Centenary year of Methodism, an active part in the work being taken by him as a member of the Trust. His powers of organisation were brought fully into play as secretary of the Melville street Wesleyan Sunday-school, and led to his being entrusted with the establishment of schools in several localities—Davey-street, O'Brien's Bridge, Sandy Bay, Harrington-street, Upper Melville-street, High-street, etc.; some of which continue to this day. During later years when he has been induced by members of his scattered family to visit them in other colonies, it was a source of great satisfaction to him to meet with those whose first acquaintance he had made in one or other of these schools. Mr. Crouch was always a temperate man, but the *beneficial* effects of the use of ardent spirits were so apparent, that he assisted *con amore* in 1833, with James Backhouse and George Washington Walker, to establish the first temperance society in Van Diemen's Land. This was long before Total Abstinence Societies were formed, and the opposition the movement experienced was but little less than that accorded to its successor in the temperance crusade. The meetings held in 1843-44 were of a very noisy character, and chairs were broken, the advocates assailed, and the tails of their coats cut off. Towards the end of 1843 he resolved to add his influence to the total abstinence cause, and for the sake of his children sign the pledge to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, which pledge he kept to the end. He was a fearless advocate of the cause, and begrudged neither money nor time to a movement he was convinced was so well calculated to elevate his fellow men. Often was his heart gladdened in seeing those who had sunk low as victims of the curse raised to positions of respect through the agency of the society. Recognising the fact that the best way to advance temperance was to lay hold of the young people before they had formed evil habits, he gladly circulated numbers of the *Band of Hope Review*, sent to him by his friend James Backhouse, of York, and was greatly grieved when he failed to persuade the managers of the Sunday-schools to order a regular supply for the various schools. However, he lived to see the day when this was changed, and the publication, as well as others of a like character, valued and regularly circulated. On the night of his decease, when acknowledging the complimentary vote passed to him, as Chairman, at the close of the proceedings, he was visibly affected, and his last words, whilst fully indicating his own recognition that the end of his service for the cause must be approaching, yet contained the expression of the fullest confidence in the lasting and ever-widening work his heirs all had so much at heart. He said: "I thank you I have only done my duty, and am thankful to my Heavenly Father that He has given me strength to be with you to-night. Whether I shall have the privilege of again meeting you is a question, but I thank God for all the mercies He has vouchsafed to me and I feel sure that while He may bury His workmen He will still carry on this great work. I thank you sincerely." Those were his last words spoken in public. In conjunction with the late Archdeacon Davies, the Rev. J. Storie, Dr. Hall, and others, he participated in the establishing of the Hobart Benevolent Society, and for many years filled the office of hon. secretary. Indeed, throughout a long and honourable life, to the utmost of his power he threw himself into every movement in the city, having for its object the elevation of his fellow-men or the alleviation of their woes.