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Obituary Notice Of The Late Dr. George C. Wallich

President

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I may be permitted to say that I rejoice to know that steps are being taken by the various societies with which he was so long and honourably connected, to raise some fitting memorial to commemorate this distinguished and worthy man.

OBITUARY NOTICE OF THE LATE DR. GEORGE C. WALLICH.

By THE PRESIDENT.

(Read 13th July 1899.)

By the death of Surgeon-Major Wallich, the Botanical Society of Edinburgh has lost one of its original members, and, so far as I know, he was the last survivor, with the exception of Dr. R. C. Alexander-Prior, M.D., F.L.S.

The first meeting of our Society was on the 17th March 1836, and the members present were—Drs. Grahame, Greville, Neill, Balfour, Barry, Parnell, and Alexander; and Messrs. Walker-Arnott, Falconer, Maughan, Stewart, Brand, Forbes, Munby, W. M'Nab, J. M'Nab, G. M. M'Nab, Tyacke, Wallich, Charlton, and Campbell.

Dr. Wallich was born at Calcutta in November 1815. His father, Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, was one of the greatest of the early Indian botanists—a worthy successor of Carey and Roxburgh. He will always be remembered as having given his name to an important genus of dwarf palms, which was named after him, *Wallichia*. The son, Dr. George Charles Wallich, was sent to Beverley, in Yorkshire, to school, and afterwards to the Reading Grammar School. He attended the Arts Classes in King's College, Aberdeen, and studied Medicine in Edinburgh, passing as a doctor there in 1836, and leaving immediately afterwards for Calcutta, where his father was superintendent of the Botanical Gardens.

At the meeting of the 17th March 1836, he was present as Mr. Wallich. In the first published list of members, dated 9th March 1837, his name appears as Dr. Wallich, Calcutta, non-resident. In the same list his father, Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, Calcutta, is entered as an honorary member.

In India, Dr. G. C. Wallich devoted himself to medicine, not science. He served in the Sutlej campaign in 1842 and the Punjab campaign in 1847, and received medals for each. In the Santal rebellion (1855-56) he held the important position of field-surgeon. I heard him described by an Indian contemporary as a first-rate medical officer, but without any of his father's taste for botany. The only paper published by him during this part of his career was "Some experiments tending to prove that the venous circulation is dependent on a vital act."

In 1858 he retired on account of bad health, having served twenty-two years in India. He resided two years in Guernsey, recovered his health, settled in London, and turned his attention to science, with such promise of success that, in 1860, he was recommended by Huxley and Sir Roderick Murchison for the post of naturalist to H.M.S. "Bulldog," commanded by Sir Leopold M'Clintock. This vessel was going to survey the Atlantic Ocean as a preliminary to laying down the Atlantic cable. While on board, Dr. Wallich made the important discovery that abundant animal life exists below the depth of a thousand fathoms. This was contrary to the belief then entertained by almost all scientific men.

Soon after his return to London, Dr. Wallich published "Notes on the presence of Animal Life at vast depths in the Ocean"; and in 1862 he published the first part of his great work, "The Atlantic Sea-bed." He afterwards published in "The Magazine of Natural History," "The Quarterly Journal of Microscopic Science," and other scientific periodicals, many papers on the distribution and life history of numerous forms of animal and vegetable pelagic organisms.

He took a prominent part in the *Bathybius* controversy. Huxley and Hæckel believed that *Bathybius Hæckelii*, a mixture of slime and lime brought up from the depths of the sea during the cable-laying experiments, was the lowest of known organisms. It was so described by Huxley in 1868, and by Hæckel in 1870.

On the other hand, Sir John Murray contended that it was only a gelatinous precipitate of sulphate of lime, precipitated from sea water mixed with alcohol.

At present the majority of scientific men believe that Murray and Wallich were right, Huxley and Hæckel wrong.

In 1898, Dr. Wallich was awarded the gold medal of the Linnean Society, in recognition of his researches into the problems connected with bathybial and pelagic life.

He died in London, on the 31st March 1899, in his eighty-fourth year, after a very exceptional career, having distinguished himself in youth as an operative surgeon,—in old age, as a man of science.

OBITUARY NOTICE OF THE LATE JAMES EDWARD TIERNEY AITCHISON, M.D., C.I.E., F.R.S., Surgeon-Major Bengal Army. By J. RUTHERFORD HILL.

(Read 8th December 1898.)

James Edward Tierney Aitchison was the second son of Major James Aitchison, H.E.I.C.S., and was born at Nimach, Central India, on 28th October 1835. He accompanied his parents to Scotland in 1844, and attended the village school at Lasswade, Midlothian, where he had as a school-mate the late Sir Charles Umpherston Aitchison. Afterwards he attended the Dalkeith High School and the Edinburgh Academy. From early childhood he had a desire to become a doctor, and from the Academy he passed to the University, where he studied Medicine and Surgery, and graduated M.D. and L.R.C.P. in 1856. He was of a very lively disposition, and fond of all sorts of games—quoits, cricket, tennis, etc. He was an abstainer and a non-smoker. He was very fond of reading history and travels. Both his parents are said to have had a great love of flowers; and his mother, Mary Turner, sister of John William Turner, Professor of Surgery in Edinburgh, had a knowledge of botany. It is interesting to note that in his student days he was an enthusiastic field botanist, and gained a first-class certificate in the botany class herbarium competition in 1854, for a collection of 530 plants, gathered, pressed, mounted, and arranged in the comparatively short period of four months. One of his fellow-students, Dr. Peter Hume McLaren, informs me that he always showed a predilection for the pursuit of botany. Dr. McLaren and he were colleagues