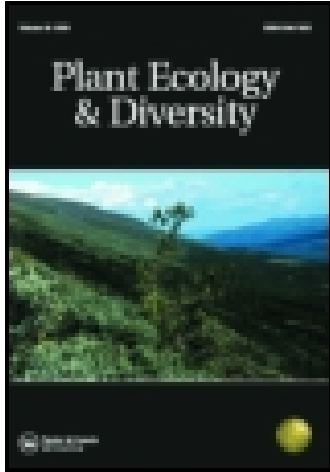


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William B. Boyd

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MEETING OF THE SOCIETY,

Thursday, December 8, 1904.

Professor I. BAYLEY BALFOUR, F.R.S., President, in the Chair.

A. C. M. BELL, Esq., W.S., East Morningside House, was proposed as a Resident Fellow of the Society by ALEX. COWAN, Esq., and seconded by Professor BAYLEY BALFOUR, F.R.S.

Mr. WM. B. BOYD read an obituary notice of the late Dr. A. P. AITKEN. The paper dealt chiefly with the career of Dr. Aitken, his connection with the Botanical Society, and his various publications in separate departments of Science.

AN OBITUARY NOTICE OF THE LATE DR. ANDREW PEBBLES
AITKEN, D.Sc. By WILLIAM B. BOYD.

Dr. Andrew Peebles Aitken, Professor of Chemistry in the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, and Lecturer on Agricultural Chemistry in the University of Edinburgh, died at his residence, 38 Garscube Terrace, Murrayfield, on Sunday, 17th April 1904. He was a native of Edinburgh, and was educated at its university, where he graduated as Master of Arts in 1867, as Bachelor of Science in the department of Physical Science in 1871, and as Doctor of Science in the department of Chemistry in 1873.

After leaving the university he studied at Heidelberg, and on his return to this country was appointed assistant to Professor Crum Brown and Demonstrator of Practical Chemistry in Edinburgh University. In 1875 Dr. Aitken was appointed Professor of Chemistry in the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College—a post which he continued to occupy up to his death.

He was elected a Fellow of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh on the 12th January 1871, and Foreign Secretary on 11th December 1884. On the 13th November he read a paper on "*Astragalus mollissimus*," and, on the 10th

December 1891, on "The Roots of Grasses in Relation to their Upper Growths" (with two plates). On the 14th November 1895 he was elected President of the Botanical Society; and on retiring, on 12th November 1896, gave a Presidential Address, on "The Nitrogenous Food of Plants." At the close of his year of office he was re-elected president for another year; and at its close, on the 11th November 1897, his Presidential Address was on "Symbiosis: The power possessed by certain leguminous plants of assimilating the free nitrogen of the air, and of converting it into their own albuminoid tissue." On the 14th January 1897 he exhibited an apple, showing carpellary proliferation; and on the 10th March 1898, he read a paper on "The Relation between the Colour of Daffodils and Composition of the Soils in which they are grown." These seem to include all his contributions to our "Transactions"; but the great amount of work which he had to perform in other relations, particularly in connection with the Highland and Agricultural Society, prevented him from giving that attention to purely botanical investigation, which in his hands would certainly have been fertile in result.

Dr. Aitken was an original member of the Scottish Alpine Botanical Club, and held the appointment of minstrel during all the years of his membership. He was a man of most genial and happy temperament, and his presence was always much appreciated by the members. During the latter years of his life, when, owing to delicate health, he was unable to be present, he was much missed. He was a delightful singer, with a sweet and sympathetic voice, and was the author of many botanical songs, which were much enjoyed by the club. He was a good all-round botanist; and the excursions on the Scottish mountains, which usually lasted for about a week, were much enjoyed by him. He was present on that memorable occasion in Glen Spean, when the club discovered, for the second time in Britain, that rare plant *Saxifraga caespitosa*, which had, about fifty years before, been discovered on Ben Aan, but the exact locality of which had been quite lost sight of, till it was refound by two or three of the members of this club growing in great beauty and luxuriance. He was also at a meeting at Braemar, when the club discovered that very rare plant *Sagina Boydii*,

which turned out to be new to science, and which, unfortunately, has never been refound since. One excursion to the Swiss Alps I well remember, when we stayed for several days at Zermatt, revelling in the rare vegetation to be found there; and, after crossing the St. Theodule Pass, we found our way to Aosta, thence to Cormayeur, from which point we enjoyed a delightful walk round Mont Blanc to Chamonix. He was a capital linguist, and never at a loss either in French or German.

Dr. Aitken was also a member of the Botanical Society Club, where many of his botanical songs (which were originally composed for this club) were sung and much enjoyed after dinner. A few of the favourites were "The Kail Yaird," "The wee Flourie that hasna got a Name," and the "Bonnie wee Moscatelle." At these dinner meetings his merry, happy, and genial manner was much appreciated.

He was also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Institute of Chemistry, the Society of Chemical Industry, the American Chemical Society, the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society, and the Scottish Meteorological Society. Dr. Aitken was appointed, in 1894, Lecturer on Agricultural Chemistry in the University of Edinburgh, and previous to that he held the appointment of Examiner in Chemistry in the same university.

I here add a few notes by Mr. J. Wyclif Black, assistant to Dr. Aitken in his chemical laboratory. The analytical work carried on by Dr. Aitken was, in its main branches, of an agricultural nature. He was analyst for several counties and burghs in Scotland, and the work which these places contributed was entirely confined to samples taken under the Food and Drugs Act. He also carried on a great amount of analytical work in connection with water-supplies, and was constantly employed as an expert witness in litigations under the Rivers' Pollution Prevention Act. Among the many cases with which he was connected I may mention the following: Spey Pollution case, Nith Pollution case, Almond Pollution case, and Braid Burn Pollution case. He also had a general consulting practice, which brought many diverse cases before his notice.

With regard to Dr. Aitken's publications, the great proportion were connected with agriculture. The greater

number of them are to be found in the "Transactions" of the Highland and Agricultural Society. In the year 1879, Dr. Aitken delivered, in the chambers of that Society, a series of lectures on chemistry as applied to agriculture, extracts from which appeared in the "North British Agriculturist" of that year. For the last three years Dr. Aitken delivered another course of lectures on "Feeding and Fodder," under the auspices of Edinburgh and East of Scotland Agricultural College. He also conducted a course of chemistry for the gardeners at the Royal Botanic Gardens. At the time of his death he was conducting an experiment on the improvement of pasture, and also an investigation into the composition of frosted and unfrosted oats.

Dr. Aitken was an exceedingly able lecturer. His never-failing energy, quickness of perception, clearness of speech, and happiness of expression, were invaluable in imparting his knowledge to others, which he did with an ease and attractiveness rarely equalled; and the order he preserved in the class-room was remarkable, and was attained without any apparent effort. He was also one of the most accessible of men, always ready to give help and advice to any one requiring it.

The great work of Dr. Aitken's life was, however, much more closely connected with the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, where he held the appointment of chemist to the Society for a period of about twenty-seven years. I am indebted to Dr. Robert Shirra Gibb, one of the directors of the Society, and also a member of the Science Committee, for the following notes on Dr. Aitken's connection with this Society and with agriculture generally. Dr. Andrew P. Aitken was appointed consulting chemist to the Society in 1877. His work, previous to that date, had been of such a kind as to indicate that he was the most suitable, in fact, the only suitable, candidate for the post then vacant. He had studied chemistry, from the agricultural point of view, both in Germany and in our own country; and had, at that early period, gained, in large degree, the confidence and regard of many of the more prominent farmers of that day, by whom he was being consulted on various matters of a chemical and botanical nature in connection with their farm operations.

When he entered on the work, under the science department of the Highland and Agricultural Society, he was already known to most of the members of that department; and his genial kindly manner, his ready humour and witty asides, soon made him the fast friend of all; while his enthusiasm, power of work, and splendid capacity for organisation, carried the department forward till it was the leading Agricultural Experimenting Institution in this country. Many of the deductions from the experiments then conducted, as reported on by Dr. Aitken in the "Transactions" of the Highland and Agricultural Society, are monuments of his power of mastering detail, and his facility for racy, clear, and succinct expression. As chemist to the Society, he had the control of experimenting work undertaken by the Society, which took two forms—first, on stations farmed for the time by the Society; second, on plots on various farms all over the country, whenever farmers were willing to take the trouble to conduct experiments.

The first consisted of (*a*) a field at Harelaw, near Longniddry, in East Lothian; and (*b*) a field at Pumpherston, West Lothian. The former was soon given up, as the soil was found to be in too high a state of cultivation to give the minute results required. The Pumpherston station was kept on for seven years; and the reports of the cropping and manuring on that station are most interesting and instructive, and are being corroborated every year by experiments in other parts, though they were then only partially understood, and were, from a scientific point of view, considerably in advance of the time. We have, however, travelled a good way since then. Many of Dr. Aitken's conclusions at that time are being now paraded by other workers as the results of original investigation.

The second part of Dr. Aitken's experimental work consisted in organising and reporting on the various experiments of a local character conducted all over the country from Caithness to Wigtownshire. These, up to the time of the doctor's lamented death, numbered twenty-five (specially scheduled and detailed), besides numerous lesser experiments, and each was conducted by probably an average of twenty to thirty farmers, many of them being carried on for a series of years, entailing visits, weighings, reports, etc.

The amount of work done in this connection alone was in every sense great; great in its inception, great in its execution, and great in its results, which it is not yet possible to estimate. The more purely chemical portion of Dr. Aitken's work for the Highland and Agricultural Society, and through it for the farmers of Scotland, presented one of its most useful features in the organisation of the work of local analytical associations. These were brought into touch with the Science Department of the Society by the giving of grants, in aid of analytical work done by them, on condition that it was reported to the Society's chemist, to be tabulated and reported on by him.

Faulty manures and feeding-stuffs were specially inquired into; and when no adequate reason was assigned for a deficiency, the defaulter's name and the circumstances of the case were published in the "Transactions." The result of this work was practically to banish fraud for a time out of the manure market; and was the cause, to a large extent, of inducing the Government to pass the Fertilizers and Feeding-Stuffs Act. For the improvement of this Act, a Departmental Committee of the Board of Agriculture has been sitting, of which Dr. Aitken was a member. This committee has not yet reported; and the death of Dr. Aitken will be a serious loss to them, when they come to consider their report.

The publication of the names of parties selling deficient manures or feeding-stuffs was recognised by those in the trade who wished honest dealing as an excellent measure of protection for them, and farmers recognised in Dr. Aitken the man who saved them from being defrauded in many ways. The confidence reposed in Dr. Aitken by the manure and feeding-stuff merchants was of a very cordial and enduring nature, and he was welcomed as an honest final arbitrator in many disputes; and to the end he had the assistance of the trade in annually drawing up a schedule of commercial values, called the "Unit Schedule," which has been a great help to many a farmer in his purchases.

In 1878 an International Agricultural Congress was held in Paris. To this a report was sent from the Highland and Agricultural Society on the "State of Agriculture in Scotland" at the time. In this report Dr. Aitken contributed an article on the "Application of Science to Agriculture." The "Trans-

actions" of the Highland and Agricultural Society, from 1877 to the last volume, 1904, give evidence of the immense amount of work, and that of the most valuable kind, which Dr. Aitken was able to perform. No one required to point out work for him; he was continually on the lookout for some new field of operation and inquiry; and few inquiries of a scientific nature were conducted during the whole of that time without his being asked to aid in carrying them out. He wrote papers on various subjects, many of them new to the agricultural world, such as, "Ground Felspar Rock as a source of Potash," "Fish Dried as a Fodder for Cattle," etc.

One specially valuable inquiry was into the nature and feeding quality of various grasses; the nature of their growth—deep-rooting, or otherwise. This extended over some years, and was carried out in the most painstaking, thorough, and enlightened manner. For the last two years Dr. Aitken has written a summary of the results obtained from experiments carried out under the auspices of the agricultural colleges, and kindred institutions, throughout the country, and thus all the lessons of value from the experiments have been noted and put into such form as to be most easily referred to when wanted—a specially useful piece of work.

The loss the agricultural community of Scotland have sustained by the death of Dr. Aitken is not easily estimated, and will be felt for many a day yet to come. He rests from his labours, but his works do follow him. He is dead, but they live.

Mr. ALEXANDER COWAN read his report on the Scottish Alpine Club Botanical Excursion in 1904.

SCOTTISH ALPINE BOTANICAL CLUB MEETING, 1904.

Messrs. W. B. Boyd, President; Rev. Dr. Paul, Vice President; G. H. Potts; A. H. Evans; Alex. Cowan, Honorary Secretary; also Ll. J. Cocks and A. C. M. Bell, visitors.

The club met on Monday, July 11th, and travelled from the Waverley Station by the forenoon train to Beauly, and thence drove to the Glenaffarie Hotel, Cannich, which had been decided upon as the place of meeting; Mr. Boyd, President of the Club, having arranged with Mrs. Chisholm,