

THE LATE PROFESSOR PARKER.

(From *Nature*.)

Thomas Jeffrey Parker was the eldest son of the late William Kitchen Parker, F.R.S., the world-renowned comparative osteologist. . . . Parker was of a distinctly artistic temperament, æsthetic, musical, well read, and possessed of marked literary ability, which asserted itself to a conspicuous degree in his little book upon his father, published in 1893, an altogether ideal filial biography—a good work by a good man. He early cultivated the critical faculty, as a direct result of the study of Matthew Arnold, whose writings he knew by heart; and with the great power of application and strength of character which he displayed during active work there can be little doubt that he would have succeeded in any of the higher walks of life. He would have made a mark in literature, and as a caricaturist draughtsman would have achieved renown; and there is little doubt that his choice of biology for his life's calling was largely due to the charm and influence of his father's career, and to his early association with Huxley, who knew him from childhood, and became the object of his veneration. Both as a teacher and investigator Parker was untiring and thoroughly trustworthy. Though easily roused to enthusiasm, he rarely became excited, and his cool deliberation came welcome to the aid of the troubled student, to whom, if in earnest, his attention knew no bounds.

His published papers exceed forty in number, and, though mostly zoological, they embody important work and observations in botany. Parker was the first appointed of the little band of biological professors sent out from Home in the eighties, who now fill the Australian and Novozelandian chairs, and his second paper published in New Zealand dealt with a new species of Holothurian (*Chirodota dunedensis*), as it were in anticipation of the later determination by himself and his contemporaries at the Antipodes to devote their attention to the indigenous fauna rather than to refinements in histology and the like, which could be better studied at Home. The work already achieved by this body of investigators, with Parker at their head, is now monumental, and none of it more so than Parker's monographs, "On the Structure and Development of Apteryx" and "On the Cranial Osteology, Classification, and Phylogeny of the Dinornithidæ," in themselves sufficient to have established his reputation. His lesser writings, though they deal with a wide range of subjects, show interesting signs of continuity of ideas, as, for example, in the association of his early observances on the stridulating organ of *Palinurus*, made in London in 1878, with those upon the structure of the head in certain species of the genus (one of the most charming of his shorter papers), made on the voyage to New Zealand, and upon the myology of *P. edwardsii*, which, in co-operation with his pupil Miss Josephine Gordon Rich (now Mrs. W. A. Haswell), he in 1893 contributed to the Macleay memorial volume. And the same may be said of his work on the blood-vascular system of the Plagiostomi.

Soon after his arrival at the Antipodes Parker instituted a series of "Studies in Biology for New Zealand Students," and, chiefly with the aid of his pupils, these have been continued, either in their original form or in that of theses for the higher degrees of the University of New Zealand, as contributions to the publications of the Museum and Geological Survey Department of that colony. Botanical as well as zoological topics were thus taken in hand, the series, like that of a companion set of "Notes from the Otago University Museum," which he from time to time contributed to the pages of *Nature*, containing important observations of general biological interest. Of Parker's books, it is sufficient to recall his "Lessons in Elementary Biology," now in its third edition, and recently translated into German, undoubtedly the most important and trustworthy work for the elementary student which has appeared since Huxley and Martin's epoch-marking "Practical Instruction in Elementary Biology," published in 1875. Parker's book, in sharp contrast to his previous "Zootomy," which is a severely didactic and somewhat uneven laboratory treatise, is a book for the study, beautifully balanced, and poetic in idea. It has a charm peculiarly its own, and to ponder over it is to appreciate to the full the honest, loving, sympathetic temperament of its author, and the conviction which he was prone to express that in the progress of scientific education there lies the panacea for most human ills, mental and corporeal.

Great though the merits of these books, Parker five years ago essayed a more formidable task in the resolve to prepare, in conjunction with his friend Professor W. A. Haswell, F.R.S., of the Sydney University, a general text-book of zoology. This work of 1,400 pages, in two volumes, will be noteworthy for the large number and excellence of its original illustrations, and from a passing knowledge of its contents I am of opinion that it will do much towards relieving English text-book writers of the opprobrium begotten of a too frequent content with mere translation and continental methods. And when we consider that Parker was not spared to see this great work in circulation, it is heartrending to relate that, though ailing and weak, he had since arranged with his co-author and publishers for the publication of a shorter text-book to be based upon it, and had prepared the preliminary pages of yet another elementary treatise to have been entitled "Biology for Beginners"; while as a next subject of research he had begun to work out, in conjunction with Mr. J. P. Hill, Demonstrator of Biology in the Sydney University, a series of emu chicks, including those collected by Professor R. Semon during his expedition into the Australian bush.

The thoroughness of Parker's best work was its most distinctive character, and when tempted to generalise he always did so with extreme caution and consideration for others, fairly presenting all sides of an argument. As he remarked of himself with characteristic modesty, in a letter written in 1894 commenting upon his chances of securing a chair of zoology at Home then vacant, "I don't profess to be brilliant, but I am vain enough to think that I have the gift of exposition, and can do a straightforward research so long as it does not involve anything about the inheritance of acquired characters." Far-reaching generalisation and random rhetoric had no charm for him, nor was he tempted into over-ambition and haste, so oft productive of slipshod and ill-conditioned results. As