

PROFESSOR STIRLING HONOURED.

Handsome Address.

Services to the Museum.

The ordinary meeting of the Public Library Board on Friday afternoon had quite an historic flavour. Preliminary business was promptly transacted, and an hour was occupied in honouring in happy and tactful style the Honorary Director of the Adelaide Museum, Professor Stirling, for his long and distinguished services. It was a ceremony of great interest, both in its personal note and in the range of its public importance. That wise and experienced supervision, which has placed the Adelaide institution so high in rank as a storehouse of treasured specimens, will fortunately remain for some time, as Professor Stirling, in his ardent love for the work, has promised to stage-manage the more dramatic presentation of the fine collection in the handsome new wing. This will be an inestimable advantage, because he will virtually define for all time the policy that is to be followed. Dr. Stirling need have no fear of how his successors 50 years hence will judge the scale and value of his operations to-day. The present attaches to the work the compliment of an eminent merit; the future, able to look back over the critical years of building, shall amplify it.

—Artistic Souvenir.—

It was in December of last year that, at the request of Professor Stirling the Board of Governors reluctantly received his resignation as a salaried Director of the Museum and gratefully accepted the offer of his honorary services in connection with the arrangement and equipment of the new home. The idea was quickly conceived of conveying to him some emphatic, although inevitably inadequate expression of the board's appreciation of a memorably worthy regime. The form which this eventually took was admirable in its taste and uniquely eloquent in its appropriate picturesqueness. This was an illuminated address in an elaborate and artistic book form. A committee, which consisted of the Chairman of the Museum Committee (Mr. W. Howchin), the Chairman of the Fine Arts Committee (Mr. E. Davies), and Dr. Rogers, was appointed to fulfil the wishes of the board and the beautiful souvenir which was presented to Dr. Stirling on Friday afternoon achieved with singularly happy success, a result that must have been dead to his own heart. If the surprised and impressed recipient could himself have designed the whole address—not the felicities of the text, because of his modesty, but the decorative scheme—the effect could probably not have been more delightfully managed. Miss Rose Fiveash added laurels to her honoured name in art circles by the fine graces of execution displayed in that work. It so charmed the Board of Governors, that, at the instance of the Museum committee, they increased the remuneration for which she had asked. The text, in old English, was written by Mr. W. Colyer. The illuminated address, which throughout was graphically symbolical of some of Professor Stirling's special lines of scientific study, consisted of four leaves in colours. A lovely warratah decorated the monogram of the initials, on the brilliant etched copper cover and toms were introduced in the border. On the first leaf were capital representations of the buildings comprised in the Public Library block, with the Museum prominently central. The flower of the eucalyptus gave admirable balance and daintiness to the page, which was enriched by pictures of an emu and kangaroo and a trophy of spears with the corporate title of the institution in a scroll. A commanding position was given on the second leaf to a cleverly managed sketch of the Diprotodon Australia, with the discovery of which Professor Stirling's name is so eminently associated in the scientific world. The massive distances of the dry interior, where the diprotodon roamed in his spacious days, were graphically suggested, and in the extreme background was a violet-bathed range. On the next page was depicted in fine colour tones a river scene and two aborigines in a dug-out canoe, one of them in the act of spearing fish. The border was daintily filled in by various native weapons. The following

series embraced the site of a native burial and on tree branches that dovetailed with artistic effect into the general decorative scheme, were a magpie, a kookaburra, and other typical specimens of the big scrubs. In the novelty of the design and the finished beauty of the brush, the souvenir was one of commanding merit.

—The Address.—

The text of the address was as follows:—
Adelaide, 27th December, 1912.
Professor E. C. Stirling, M.A., M.D., F.R.S.,
D.Sc., U.M.G.,
Museum, Adelaide.

Sir—At the meeting of the board held on December 20, your letter resigning your position as Museum Director was received with regret. The members of the board on deciding to accept your resignation, remembered that your first association with the institution dates back for more than 30 years; that you were a member of the Board of the South Australian Institute in 1881, and its Chairman in 1882-3, and that you became hon. curator of the Museum in 1889, and continued to direct the work of the department in that capacity until 1906, when you were appointed to the position which you are now resigning, and which you have held with so much credit to yourself and benefit to the institution.

The board, recognising the value of such lengthy service to the institution and the State, desires to assure you that, while your resignation has been accepted with regret, it is glad to learn that you do not propose entirely to sever your connection with the Museum, and that you are prepared to continue to perform certain duties as director in an honorary capacity. The board is relieved to know that the preparations for arranging the specimens in the new building are not to be interfered with, and that under your able direction it may expect in that structure a display which will reflect credit alike on the Museum and yourself.

We have great pleasure in acceding to the board's request that we should communicate to you these sentiments.

We are, Sir, faithfully yours,
Will J. Sowden, President.
W. Howchin, Chairman of Museum Committee.
J. R. G. Adams, General Secretary.

The seal was attached to the address, and was signed by the President and the Secretary.

—A Brilliant Record.—

The President remarked that in December of last year Professor Stirling had resigned the position of Director of the Museum after a long and brilliant record of service, which had extended over 17 years, and had then offered to act in an honorary capacity until the completion of the transfer and rearrangement of the exhibits in the new building—an offer which had been accepted by the board with thanks. The board formally accepted the resignation and the offer—the former with regret, the latter with avidity. The work which the professor had thus undertaken voluntarily and as a labour of love had been by no means light. The question of the selection and positions of the various specimens required a great deal of judgment and sufficient experience, which the professor had stored up in those long and busy years. The board rightly decided that such an offer could not be passed over in a merely prosaic and matter-of-fact manner, and resolved that Dr. Stirling's distinguished services should be acknowledged in a way that would be in good taste and would express, however inefficiently, the appreciation of the board of the value of the work he had rendered to the whole community. The scientific work of Professor Stirling in at least one line of research had won for him world-wide fame. The board, after careful consideration, came to the conclusion that the best form of recognition would be an illuminated address, which would not only textually express its gratitude but also, in its decorations and illustrations, be symbolical of the special researches made by Professor Stirling in his line of science. They would all admit that Miss Rose Fiveash, who had attended to the detail work, and had been responsible largely for the design, had produced an address which was thoroughly deserving of the compliment paid to her by the Museum committee in increasing the modest fee which that lady had asked for her artistic services. Puffs of flattery was by no means necessary in referring to Dr. Stirling, because the value of his work was such that it would be impertinence and presumption to elaborate it. Dr. Stirling had a long list of eminent letters after his name, but the simple letters "Thank you" were perhaps far more eloquent coming from those intimately associated with him than any other title could possibly be—although speaking of high attainment.

—Kingly Honour.—

The Vice-President (Mr. L. Graysop) said Professor Stirling, by the use of his hands and brain, and by the exercise of timely effort, had opened out before his fellow-colonists the great works of Nature, and the record had been of a singularly high educational character. Dr. Stirling had conferred blessings on the people, the value of which could not be measured. His services had involved no end of time and thought and anxiety. The achievements were of such a scale and importance that they deserved at the hands of the King a higher honour than Professor Stirling had yet received. But it was not merely seeking honour that had caused him to give such time and labour to produce such examples of his technical skill.

Mr. W. Howchin (Chairman of the Museum Committee) said his memory took him back more than 30 years, to the days when the national collection was housed in a little upper room in the old Institute Building. He had a very distinct remembrance of its nature—a very promiscuous display of antiquarian objects which were popularly known as curios. They had today a museum of which any State might well be proud, and in some of its features it was unique. He believed they had the finest ethnological collection of Australian remains to be found in any museum in the world. The great institution they had at present might be said to be the result of Professor Stirling's creative genius. Dr. Stirling found it of small scientific value, a promiscuous, diversified, and almost unclassified collection of natural objects. Now, it was one of the great centres of educational interest in the State, and one, the foundation of which had been laid so well by Dr. Stirling, a growing and ever-extending institution would be built. Professor Stirling's reputation as a scientist had a world-wide ambit. His monumental work on the vertebrate fossils of Lake Callabonna brought not only distinction to the Museum, but gave the State a scientific status which few other sources of investigation had brought it. It had been an achievement of many years of patient investigation, and the monograph which was forming a part of the memoirs of the Royal Society of South Australia was an exceedingly valuable contribution to scientific literature. It was a source of very great satisfaction

that although the professor was withdrawing from the position of a salaried officer he was not severing his connection with the institution. They would still have the advantage of his oversight and stimulus at the critical period of building up the new Museum which Dr. Stirling hoped to make as near to perfection as possible.

Mr. E. Davies (Chairman of the Fine Arts Committee) said the board had always found Dr. Stirling a most kindly, courteous, and able gentleman as well as an officer of exceptional ability.

Professor Henderson said in all matters concerning human and natural history of the State they should have records and specimens which would make each separate collection in the various Australian centres the most valuable in the world so far as they affected each State. It was a duty they owed to the rest of the world. South Australia had been singularly fortunate in having had in the past the services of a gentleman who had a distinguished European reputation. Professor Stirling had not only got the specimens collected, but had laid down the lines of progress and policy for the institution in the future. To direct an institution in the making, demanded initiative, insight, patience, and knowledge, and Professor Stirling possessed all three qualifications. Professor Stirling's friends would bear testimony to his zeal in securing specimens for the Museum. If ever they possessed anything of scientific value they made a point of not telling the doctor, because he would run it off to the Museum.

Mr. L. H. Sholl (Chairman of the Finance Committee) said all that the Museum now represented was due to Professor Stirling's services, and the board had been exceedingly fortunate in having had the value of his eminent direction.

—Professor Stirling's Reply.—

Professor Stirling said he did not desire and he certainly did not expect that very handsome recognition of such service as he was supposed to have rendered to the institution. He thanked them very sincerely for the kind thoughts that had prompted the gift and the kind expressions that had been uttered that afternoon. He had been well aware that he enjoyed their confidence, and he did not remember one request that he had made to the Museum committee that had not been granted so far as finances had allowed. Two causes had contributed to the success that he had obtained. One was the knowledge of their confidence, and the other was the good fortune of having been served by an exceedingly competent staff. Although the Museum in many respects was small no one could go through it without being satisfied that what they had got was good of its sort. Without fear of unfavourable comparison they might go through any museum in the southern hemisphere, and he did not think they would see any individual specimens that were better examples of the taxidermist's art than were to be seen in Adelaide. The Museum occupied a curious position. Every educated person had a certain knowledge of books, and was qualified to speak on that subject. Everybody thought he knew something about art, but in one sense fortunately very few people had a knowledge of the intricate questions of museum economy. The consequence was that it was absolutely necessary, even for a museum committee, to leave to the Director a large measure of responsibility and initiative.

—More than Stuffed Animals.—

It was a great advantage for an individual to be able to do and get what he wanted.