Obituary.

EDWARD CHARLES STIRLING.

Dr. J. C. Verco, the President of the South Australian Branch of the British Medical Association, has given a masterly summary of the chief landmarks in the career of Edward Charles Stirling. Had he been an ordinary man, there would have been little left for us to say, but the facts that his interests were diverse and manifold and that he excelled in every branch of learning that he approached, render it almost impossible for anyone to traverse the whole field of his activities within the scope of a newspaper article. Dr. Verco and our Adelaide colleagues have referred to the deceased scientist as a prime mover in the history of medicine in South Australia. We find traces of his influence in the scattered medical throughout the whole of the Commonwealth and claim for him an international reputation.

Edward Charles Stirling was born in 1848—70 years ago Dr. Verco records the main facts concerning his school and student life. He left Cambridge in 1878 and, after holding a series of less important positions, was appointed to the staff of St. George's Hospital as Assistant Surgeon. Before he left England for South Australia in 1881 he had held the position of surgeon at the Belgrave Children's Hospital and, at his old medical school, the position of lecturer on histology, lecturer on operative surgery and lecturer on physiology. It will thus be seen that by the time he had reached his thirtieth year he had demonstrated his extraordinary versatility and ability in branches of study not usually combined.

In Adelaide the qualities which had attracted the attention of his contemporaries in London, again manifested themselves. Evidently. At first he became surgeon at the Adelaide Hospital and lecturer on clinical surgery at the University. A year or two later he was appointed the lecturer of physiology and in 1900 he stepped into the newly-created chair of this science. One year after his return to Australia he was appointed a member of the Board of Management of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery. Subsequently he became the honorary Director of the Museum and, still later, he became the paid Director. The Museum attracted him very strongly and he worked long and arduously in the endeavour to make the collection of Australian fauna the most complete in the world. After he had relinquished his calmer position in 1888, in 1889 he was appointed an honorary Director by the University of Adelaide.

His association with the University of Adelaide, which started shortly after his return from England, governed the remainder of his life. The Medical School was founded under his influence and he was the first professor of medicine. Edward Charles Stirling was an important actor in its foundation and, indeed, it may be said that without him the school might have assumed a very different shape. It is little wonder that he should have been selected to fill the position of Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

Dr. Verco has referred to his achievements as a naturalist, as an ethnologist, as an anthropologist and as a paleontologist. His contributions to the proceedings of the Royal Society, the Royal Society of South Australia and of other not exclusively medical societies have dealt largely with these sciences. It is significant that the Netherlands Government conferred upon him a gold medal in recognition of his contributions to science and art. In 1892 he took part in an expedition across the Australian continent from Darwin to Adelaide. He made a valuable collection of flowers, plants, animals and birds, and many of these found their way into the museum as specimens. In 1892 he contributed to the discovery of a salt pan in Central Australia, known as Lake Callabonna, where the bones of the Diprotodon were found.

The studies of Edward Charles Stirling the limbs of the marsupial animals were unknown and the ideas of the creature as a whole were erroneous. A palaeontological camp was established at Lake Callabonna, from which several fragments of the limbs were collected with infinite patience and skill. From this material the casts so often seen in museums were completed. For these worthy scientific achievements Edward Charles Stirling was elected in 1899 to the Fellowship of the Royal Society of South Australia. In 1894 he joined the Horn Expedition as Medical Officer and Anthropologist and again returned with a wonderful collection of bones, unique. In his descriptions of the results of these expeditions he has evinced a very weighty appreciation of the contributory sciences and has added many fascinating chapters to the history of Australian fauna and flora.

It is stated that his dissections of the Notoryctes typhlops, the marsupial mole, and his description of its anatomy and physiology are patrimony of many generations as a guide. In 1914 he served as Chairman of the South Australian Committee in connexion with the visit of the British Association for Science. During these expeditions Edward Charles Stirling embarked in a study of the Australian aboriginal man. He brought back with him specimens of skulls and bones, implements of peace and war and religious emblems. His knowledge of botany and his deep appreciation of the aborigines was responsible for his passion for horticulture. His garden at Mount Lofty was at the same time his pride and the admiration of all visitors.

For some years he took much interest in public affairs. In 1884 he contested a seat in the House of Assembly and was placed at the head of the poll for the constituency of North Adelaide. In Parliament he advocated the extension of the medical profession in the state.

![Image of a skull]

1885: 35 years ago.