

OBITUARY.

THOMAS DAVIES, F.G.S.

[Died 21st December, 1892.]

Mr. Thomas Davies was born on 29th December, 1837, in the neighbourhood of London, and was the son of Mr. William Davies, F.G.S., of the Geological Department of the British Museum. His early education was of a very elementary character, and the period of his school-life was brief: finding town life irksome, and yearning for freedom and adventure, he took to the sea at the age of 14, and during the next four years led a roving life, visiting China, India, and various parts of South America. He was then prevailed upon by his father to adopt a more settled mode of existence, and on the separation of the Department of Mineralogy from that of Geology, was appointed in 1858 a third class attendant at the British Museum, under Professor Maskelyne, to whom the care of the minerals had been assigned: in the following year he added to his responsibilities by marriage.

During the next nine years, save for a short interval when Dr. Viktor von Lang was an assistant in the Department, Mr. Davies was the sole helper of Mr. Maskelyne in the arrangement and examination of the mineral collections: during this time Mr. Maskelyne effected a thorough change in the classification and arrangement of the minerals, and labelled with localities the large number of specimens that were without any descriptions except what could be traced out in old catalogues. In this work and in cleaning and arranging some tons of specimens, of which many were entirely valueless, the patient and intelligent aid of 'young Davies' alone rendered it possible to carry out the preliminary operations. As the collection grew into orderly arrangement, the registration and labelling of specimens were entrusted to him by Mr. Maskelyne. It was thus that he gradually acquired an eye-knowledge of minerals, which has rarely, if ever, been surpassed. His perception of the peculiarities of a specimen was remarkably quick, while his remembrance of individual specimens was almost marvellous. One instance of his powers of memory may be mentioned as an illustration:—

On his return to the Museum in 1891, after twelve months' absence

on sick-leave, it was a matter of some anxiety to his friends as to whether his memory of specimens might not have been permanently affected by his long illness: this anxiety was soon set at rest, for glancing at some specimens which had been acquired during his absence, and noticing one accompanied by a written statement of its locality, he made the immediate remark that the matrix was identical with that of a specimen already in the collection, of which the locality was unknown, and expressed his delight at being at last able to put a locality-label with it. In this case the specimen could not have been seen by him for at least 12 months, and possibly had not attracted his attention for years: and to the ordinary mind there seemed nothing remarkable about the specimen to fix it in the memory.

In fact, it was particularly in the habits, the localities, the associations and modes of occurrence of mineral species that he concentrated his interest: and to his knowledge in this direction his earlier training, under the eye of Mr. Maskelyne, in the labelling of the minerals accumulated in the cases and drawers very largely contributed.

In the early years of Mr. Davies's Museum life, Mr. Maskelyne was further engaged in the study of thin sections of meteorites, and initiated Mr. Davies into a knowledge of the microscopic characters of rock-forming minerals, a mode of investigation then almost unknown: in this direction his quickness of perception and excellence of memory had full scope for play, and Mr. Davies soon became extremely skilful in the microscopic determination of minerals in rock-sections, and in the recognition of peculiarities of rock-structure. Few practical petrologists approached him in this faculty.

Nor did he neglect to improve his general education: with this end in view he attended the evening classes at the Working Men's College in Great Ormond St., and in the course of time acquired a knowledge of both French and German: he was also familiar with plants and fossils, a knowledge derived from his father.

His remarkable qualifications attracted the early attention of Mr. Maskelyne, and in 1862 were officially recognised in his promotion by the Trustees from the grade of attendant to that of Transcriber or Junior Assistant. In 1880 he was promoted to the grade of First Class Assistant: by a remarkable coincidence, his father, Mr. William Davies, who had long been renowned for his large practical knowledge of important branches of palæontology, and especially of fossil fishes, and had likewise begun Museum life as an attendant, obtained the same promotion on the same day. In the same year he was awarded the Balance of the Proceeds of the

Wollaston Fund by the Council of the Geological Society "as a testimony of the value of his researches in Mineralogy and Lithology." At the time of presentation, the President, Dr. Sorby, said:—"Valuable as have been the results which you have made public, we all feel that in many cases you have still further advanced our science by the generous assistance which you have afforded to others." Still later, in 1889, the name of Daviesite was given to a new mineral, "in honour of Mr. Thomas Davies, who has now been associated during upwards of thirty years with the British Museum Mineral Collection, and whose mineralogical experience and Breithauptian eye have ever been willingly placed at the service, not only of his colleagues, but of every one who has been brought into relationship with him."

He became a Fellow of the Geological Society in 1870, and was an early Member of the Mineralogical Society of France.

His published work was not voluminous: it relates almost exclusively to the microscopic characters of the Pre-Cambrian Rocks. He contributed, however, the bulk of the articles on Mineralogy and Petrology for Cassell's "Encyclopædic Dictionary," and for some years edited the Mineralogical Magazine for this Society. The following is a list of his publications:—

1. The researches (of Mr. David Forbes) in British Mineralogy. *Geol. Mag.* 1867, Vol. 4, p. 575; 1868, Vol. 5, p. 102.
2. Notes on Vauquelinite from Scotland and Cantonite from Cornwall. *Min. Mag.*, 1877, Vol. 4, p. 112.
3. Note on a rock specimen from the centre of the so-called porphyritic mass to the East of Taly-y-sarn. *Quart. Jour. Geol. Soc.*, 1878, Vol. 34, p. 152.
4. Note on Jadeite and Jade. *Geol. Mag.*, 1878, Vol. 5, p. 192.
5. Appendix on the microscopic structure of some Dimetian and Pebidian rocks of Pembrokeshire. *Quart. Jour. Geol. Soc.*, 1878, Vol. 34, p. 161.
6. Appendix on the microscopic structure of a new group of Pre-Cambrian rocks (the Arvonian) in Pembrokeshire. *Ibid.*, 1879, Vol. 35, p. 285.
7. Preliminary Note on old Rhyolites from Bouley Bay, Jersey. *Min. Mag.* 1880, Vol. 3, p. 118.
8. Petrological notes on the Pre-Cambrian rocks of West and Central Ross-shire. *Geol. Mag.*, 1880, Vol. 7, pp. 103, 155, 222, 226.
9. Appendix on the microscopic structure of the Pre-Cambrian rocks of Pembrokeshire, with especial reference to the St. David's District. *Quart. Jour. Geol. Soc.*, 1880, Vol. 40, p. 507.

Mr. Maskelyne, for whom he was right-hand man and almost sole working helper during upwards of twenty years, looks back with fond regret on the uninterrupted happiness of their association. According to my own experience during the last fifteen years he was a most excellent colleague, always cheerful, good tempered, and kind hearted, ever ready to help in any direction, however much it might interfere with the particular work he had immediately in hand, ever willing to learn, for any question.

that other side of which the possible existence might not have suggested itself to him. At home he was an enthusiastic gardener: wet or fine, absolutely reckless of weather, he was at work from early sunrise, and could boast the possession of one of the best managed gardens in the neighbourhood. His love of fresh air and the bustling east wind never left him: even after recovery from the long illness which two years ago had taken him to the verge of the grave, and from which he never fully recovered, he did not hesitate to show his former contempt for the protection of an umbrella, and notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friends might occasionally be seen still enjoying the beating of the wind and rain on his unprotected face.

Mr. Davies leaves a widow and a family of five daughters and four sons to mourn his loss.

He was an Original Member of the Mineralogical Society, and Foreign Secretary for several years preceding his death.

A "Thomas Davies Memorial Fund" has been initiated by the Council, with Mr. Maskelyne as Chairman of the Executive Committee: Dr. Hugo Müller, F.R.S., 13 Park Square East, Regent's Park, N.W., as Treasurer, will be glad to receive contributions from any who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity of commemorating the services of Mr. Davies to Mineralogical Science.

L. FLETCHER.
