



SUTHERLAND SINCLAIR

FROM A COMPARATIVELY RECENT PORTRAIT.

OBITUARY.

SUTHERLAND SINCLAIR.

Secretary, September, 1882 to May, 1917.

Mr. Sutherland Sinclair was the eldest son of the Rev. Sutherland Sinclair, of Greenock, Scotland, where the subject of this notice was born on 25th October, 1851. He was educated at the Greenock Academy, and after leaving school in 1866 was engaged in mercantile pursuits in Glasgow.

In November, 1870, Mr. Sinclair voyaged to Pensacola, in Florida, returning the next year.

Only a few are aware how extensively travelled a man Mr. Sinclair was. In November, 1871, he left the Clyde in the ship "Tamerlane" bound for Sydney, arriving on 15th February, 1872. In his itinerary he records as one of his first visits as that to the Australian Museum, which he describes as a large building "with some pretensions to architectural beauty."

It was evidently in his mind to obtain employment in Sydney, but failing to acquire a satisfactory position he stuck to the "Tamerlane," which next proceeded to Shanghai, coal laden, leaving here on 12th March, 1872, and arrived at the Chinese port in the following May. Thence in June to Kobe, Japan, in ballast, via Osaka in the same month, reaching Kobe on 30th June. In the following month the vessel was at Hong Kong and Amoy Island. The final stage but one of his voyage was now entered on for the "Tamerlane" left Eastern waters in September for New York, rice laden, by the Cape of Good Hope route. In the Atlantic St. Helena was touched at in December, 1872, and Sinclair duly availed himself of the opportunity to visit Longwood, and the site of Napoleon's tomb. New York was reached on 3rd February, 1873, and on the eighteenth of the same month the vessel started on the return "home." The Tail of the Bank was reached on 19th March, 1873, so bringing this long voyage to a close.

On his return to Scotland he again entered into business employment, and in September was elected Superintendent of the Govan United Presbyterian Church Sabbath School at the early age of twenty-six. His second voyage to Sydney appears to have been taken chiefly for health reasons. He left Liverpool in April, 1879, in the ship "Gryfe" accompanied by a brother, Mr. T. C. Sinclair. They arrived in July of the same year, and Mr. S. Sinclair again took up mercantile pursuits, until his attention was called to the vacant position of Secretary to the Trustees of the Australian Museum. As the successful candidate he was appointed on the 8th September, 1882,¹ and on 6th October, 1891, also undertook the duties of Librarian and Storekeeper.²

In July, 1885, Mr. Sinclair was granted leave of absence to visit Great Britain, and it was during this visit that the writer had the pleasure of making his acquaintance.

In April and May, 1894, the Secretary visited Erromanga, New Hebrides, as the guest of his close friend, the Rev. Dr. H. A. Robertson of that island, when he succeeded in obtaining some valuable Ethnological specimens; during his absence the writer acted as his *locum tenens*.

In March, 1906, sudden and severe illness overtook him, and in consequence a rather extended absence from official duties became necessary.

Mr. Sinclair was pre-eminently a philanthropist—the one object of his life was to advance the wellbeing of his fellow men, regardless of creed or social position. In the prosecution of this self-denying object, he, in 1880, accepted the Superintendentship of the St. Peters Presbyterian Sabbath School, North Sydney. Whilst so engaged he became interested in the Children's Ministering League, and was also the first to originate the Boys' Brigade in New South Wales, in 1896; in 1905 was formed the "1st Sydney Company" as inaugurated

¹ Minutes, 8th Sept., 1882, p. 414.

² *Ibid.*, 6th Oct., 1891, p. 70.

with Sinclair as "Captain," and the Rev. James Kinghorn, Minister of St. Peters, as "Chaplain." This organisation must not be mistaken for either the Church, or Paper Boys' Brigades, philanthropic bodies of a like nature, but distinct. Mr. Sinclair resigned his official position in the Sunday School in July, 1906, after from twenty-six to twenty-seven years close and efficient control, but ever after retained his interest therein.

In 1883, Sinclair became Honorary Secretary of the Young Peoples' Scripture Union of Australasia, a step which accorded well with the predilection and affection always manifested by him towards the young. Another of Mr. Sinclair's benevolent activities were the operations of the Sydney City Mission, of which he became a Member of Council in June, 1911. In April, 1912, he was elected to a seat on the Committee of the Bible Society, which he had joined in 1910.

Mr. Sinclair always manifested great interest in Missionary work, particularly the labours of the Presbyterian Church in the New Hebrides, associating himself chiefly with his friend, the Rev. Dr. H. A. Robertson. His participation in and predilection for the New Hebridean Mission were also the means of adding many valuable specimens to the Museum Collection.

One of the great objects of his life was the education of the blind, both morally, physically, and industrially. In this great cause he became the Hon. Assistant Secretary to the Committee of the Sydney Industrial Blind Institution, Boomerang Street, in 1884, a Member of the Committee in 1886, and Hon. Secretary in 1887, succeeding Mr. John Dawson, who became Treasurer³; he was thus officially connected with this meritorious institution for upwards of thirty-three years.

A gentle, sincere, unostentatious, upright, truly religious man and gentleman was Sutherland Sinclair, one whom any person might have been proud to call friend. He died after protracted illness on 3rd May last in the sixty-sixth year of his age.⁴

³ Sydney Industrial Blind Institution. Illustrated Souvenir, 1879-1910 (oblong, Sydney, *n.d.*)

⁴ For many of the facts in this brief notice I am indebted to Dr. Eric Sinclair, Inspector-General of the Insane, New South Wales, who afforded me access to some of Mr. Sinclair's private memoranda.

In connection with the Australian Museum, Mr. Sinclair was the author of the following publications :—

- 1.—Guide to the Contents of the Australian Museum, pp. 146, plan, etc. (8vo. Sydney, 1890).
- 2.—Notes of a visit to the Island of Erromanga, New Hebrides in May, 1894. *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales*, ix. (2), 1895, pp. 701-7.
- 3.—The Australian Museum Library. *Trans. and Proc. Second Internat. Library Conference for 1897* (1898), pp. 207-8.
- 4.—The Australian Museum. *Proc. Museums Assoc. 9th Ann. Meeting for 1898* (1899), pp. 151-5.
- 5.—List of Publications issued by Authority of the Trustees of the Australian Museum.⁵ *Austr. Mus. Miscellaneous Publications*, x., pp. 67 (8vo. Sydney, 1916).

R. ETHERIDGE, JUNR.

⁵ With the co-operation of Mr. W. A. Rainbow, Assistant Librarian.