

James Currie, M.A. (Cantab.), LL.D. (Edin.).

By the death of Dr James Currie in November 1930 this Society has lost one who for many years rendered it valuable and devoted service, and Edinburgh a noteworthy and generous citizen. In Dr Currie there was met a combination of qualities and gifts which is somewhat rare. Though much of his life was devoted to commerce, and his success in business was notable, he was at the same time a man of wide reading and high culture, a gifted linguist, and a scientist of no mean attainments. Retiring by nature and modest to a degree, he possessed a pawky humour which was delightful to those who had the privilege of his friendship, and a ripe wisdom which made him invaluable on Public Boards and Councils.

James Currie was born at Leith on 13th April 1863. He was educated at Edinburgh Academy, and later at Godesberg on the Rhine where he soon acquired a knowledge of the German language and discovered that he had an aptitude for foreign languages, many of which he mastered during subsequent years. After spending a little time at the University of Edinburgh, he went into residence at Trinity College, Cambridge, and there graduated B.A., taking the Mathematical Tripos.

Before his marriage he took a voyage round the world, and during the course of his life yachting on the West Coast of Scotland and to the Faroe Islands occupied a considerable part of his summer holidays. He married a daughter of Mr W. A. Peterkin of H.M. Board of Supervision (now Local Government Board), to whom he was devoted, and through whom much of his philanthropic work was done in a quiet and unostentatious manner.

Mr Currie's principal business was that of a shipowner. The name of Currie is well known in the shipping world and he carried on during his business career the high traditions of the family in marine affairs. He succeeded his father, the late James Currie, as Manager of the Leith, Hull, and Hamburg Steam Packet Co., Ltd., and the success of that company was largely due to his conspicuous directing ability. In addition he was interested in many other undertakings. He was a Director for many years in the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company. Educational projects found in him a willing supporter. For many years he was one of the Governors of George Heriot's Trust, and subsequently a Governor of the Heriot-Watt College. He also served as Governor in the Leith Nautical College. During the War he acted as Chairman of the

Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and took an active part in the institution of a Degree in Commerce at the University of Edinburgh.

He was a generous benefactor to the University, and as a recognition of his public services he was awarded the Honorary Degree of LL.D. in 1919.

His services to the Scientific Societies of Edinburgh were especially notable. His father was one of the original founders of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Dr James Currie himself served on the Council of that Society for many years, and for over a quarter of a century he acted as Honorary Treasurer. He was also one of the Trustees of that Society.

He took a prominent part in the affairs of the Edinburgh Geological Society and served as Member of the Council of that Society, acted as Secretary from 1898–1903, and filled the Presidential Chair (1904–1906).

His scientific interests were wide. He was a keen botanist and archæologist, but his special field of work was in mineralogy, especially on its crystallographic side. He published several important papers in the *Transactions of the Edinburgh Geological Society*, the most notable of which was the Presidential Address given in 1905 on "The Mineralogy of the Faroes," in which he dealt especially with the zeolites, a group of minerals in which he took a particular interest. Of the other papers, mention may be made of one in particular, namely, that on "The Minerals of the Tertiary Eruptive Rocks of Ben More, Mull," published in 1909. He was also a frequent contributor to the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*. The section on "Pseudomorphs" in Heddle's *Mineralogy of Scotland* came from his pen. He was an enthusiastic collector of minerals and travelled widely in search of rare specimens. For some time he was closely associated in this work with the late Professor Heddle of St Andrews.

In the course of years he gathered together a large and valuable collection, which was housed in a museum at Larkfield, his residence in Edinburgh, and overflowed to other portions of the house to the embarrassment of his good lady, who already found it difficult to find place for valuable collections of china and other rarities. He made a speciality of zeolites from the Faroe Islands and the Inner Hebrides. On his death this splendid collection was most generously presented to the Geology Department of the University of Edinburgh by Mrs Currie and her family as a permanent memorial to him.

After acquiring the fine mansion and estate of Inverawe, near Loch Etive, he devoted much of his time to sylviculture, for which he found scope in the beautiful woodlands surrounding the house. He took a great interest in the place-names of Argyllshire and in that way acquired some knowledge of the Gaelic language.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1898, became Treasurer of the Society in 1906, and held that office until 1926, a period of twenty years. He became Vice-President in 1926, which office he held until his retirement by rotation in 1929. During these twenty-three years as Member of the Council, the Society had the benefit of his experience and wisdom in every question that came before it, particularly regarding the finances of the Society. During the difficult War and post-War periods his services were especially valuable in piloting the Society's finances, which, on his retirement, were left in a very satisfactory state.

For some years he served as Honorary Treasurer of the Royal Society Club, and his geniality and wit will long be remembered by those who sat around that festive board.

It is but fitting that we should pay a warm tribute to one who gave such unstinted and willing aid to the Royal Society in difficult times. Dr Currie passed away on 3rd November 1930, and he will be greatly missed, not only on public bodies, but also by a wide circle of friends.

T. J. J.