

## OBITUARY.

### J. A. Thomson.

We regret to announce the death of James Allan Thomson, M.A., D.Sc., F.G.S., F.N.Z.Inst., Director of the Dominion Museum, Wellington, New Zealand. Dr. Thomson was the first Rhodes Scholar of New Zealand University. After completing his training at Oxford under the direction of Professor W. J. Sollas, he did petrological work in Western Australia, and later studied the inclusions in volcanic rocks from the Ross Archipelago in the Antarctic. On his return to the Dominion he was attracted to Palaeontology, and in 1911 was appointed Palaeontologist to the Geological Survey under P. G. Morgan. In 1913 he inaugurated a series of palaeontological bulletins with his "Materials for the Palaeontology of New Zealand". His studies of the stratigraphy and palaeontology of the Waipara and Weka Pass districts placed the New Zealand Upper Cretaceous Tertiary sequence on a firm basis.

After his appointment to the Dominion Museum in 1914 he commenced his studies of Tertiary and Recent brachiopoda, and soon established an international reputation. His final work, *Brachiopod Morphology and Genera (Recent and Tertiary)*, published happily before his death, represents the result of more than ten years study of that group, and is a magnificent monument to his memory.

Dr. Thomson, in spite of his failing health, took a major part in the scientific affairs in the Dominion. He was editor of the *New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology*, secretary to the Board of Science and Art, an original fellow of the New Zealand Institute, and just before his death President of that body. In 1923 he was awarded the Hutton Memorial Medal.

The scope of his activities was wide, and he was able to bring to bear on scientific matters a well-trained, keen intellect, and a high capacity for original research.

His death is a great loss to science, but his work will bear fruit and his example stimulate.

R. S. ALLAN.

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### Percy Gates Morgan, M.A.

BORN 2ND SEPTEMBER, 1867.

DIED 26TH NOVEMBER, 1927.

We regret to announce the death, on 26th November, 1927, after a short illness, of Percy Gates Morgan, Director of the New Zealand Geological Survey. The late Mr. Morgan received his training at Otago University School of Mines, Dunedin, and graduated Master of Arts of New Zealand University in 1891. After a varied experience of practical mining he joined the staff of the

New Zealand Geological Survey, and was appointed Director after the resignation of J. M. Bell in 1911.

He was by training and inclination a mining geologist, and under his direction, and through his activities in the field, there appeared a succession of bulletins dealing primarily with the coal and gold resources of the Dominion. At the same time, by his sympathetic co-operation, J. A. Thomson was able to inaugurate a series of palaeontological bulletins which have placed New Zealand palaeontology on a firm basis.

P. G. Morgan was by nature cautious, thorough, and painstaking. He had a wide knowledge of geological literature and thought, and a high ideal of the functions of a state geological survey.

R. S. ALLAN.

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### **Wilhelm von Branca.**

BORN 9TH SEPTEMBER, 1844.

DIED 12TH MARCH, 1928.

With Wilhelm von Branca one of the most prominent German geologists has passed away. The active part of his life is now somewhat remote, for he retired more than ten years ago (1917). Thus for the younger generation his geological work has more of an historical nature, but it is our duty to pay tribute to the fame of a great master whose name will always be associated with vulcanology and matters connected therewith.

Wilhelm von Branca was born in 1844 at Potsdam, near Berlin. He studied at Greifswald, Halle, Heidelberg, Rome, Berlin, Strassburg and Munich. He graduated at Heidelberg (Dr. phil.) and Tuebingen (Dr. rer. nat.) in 1876. In the same year he became a demonstrator in Mineralogy at Heidelberg, 1881. He began his career as lecturer in Berlin, in the same year in Aachen. One year later he joined the Geological Survey at Berlin. In 1887 he was made a Professor of Mineralogy at Koenigsberg and fulfilled the same function from 1890 to 1895 at Tuebingen and 1895 to 1899 at Hohenheim. He was then called to Berlin as the successor to Leopold von Buch. He taught geology here up to 1917, when he retired and was succeeded by J. F. Pompeckj. His work, the fruit of strenuous untiring effort, won for him recognitions both at home and abroad. Thus he was made a "Geheimer Bergrath" in 1898, an honorary Doctor of several German universities, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academies of Berlin and St. Petersburg.

Practically in all branches of geological work Branca has left great contributions. His Doctorate thesis dealt with the volcanoes of the Herniker district (Italy) and vulcanism remained his favourite subject. Among the most important publications which were partly of a mere theoretical and partly of stratigraphical nature two works are especially outstanding, both of which have shown new ways to