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PROFESSOR H. H. CROFT, D.C.L.

A most interesting memoir of the first President of the Entomological Society of Ontario, by Mr. John King, K.C., has recently been published by the Macmillan Company of Toronto.* Through the kindness of the publishers we are enabled to present to our readers an excellent portrait of one of the pioneers in Canadian Entomology, who was largely instrumental in founding the Society.

Henry Holmes Croft was born in London, England, in 1820; his first schoolmasters were French and Spanish refugees from the great Napoleonic wars, who strove to make a precarious living by teaching boys in their city of refuge. From them he passed on to Tavistock House, where he received an excellent training and the foundation of a sound education. During this period, while still a mere lad, he manifested a great taste for chemistry and carried on experiments in a small closet under the kitchen stairway in his father's house, much to the annoyance and disgust of the members of the family, who showed no appreciation of a science which seemed to produce only alarming explosions and abominable smells.

After leaving school he spent a year in the office of his father, who was Deputy Paymaster-General in the Ordnance Department, then situated in the Tower of London. With him and an elder brother he walked to the Tower and back, eight miles each way, morning and evening throughout the week, and by this means acquired vigorous health and a robust constitution which continued through life. Office work was by no means congenial, and the heart of the youth was in his little den under the stairs. By the advice of Professor Faraday, whom his father consulted, he was sent to study chemistry at the University of Berlin. He did not, however, confine his attention to this subject, but took courses of study in biology, physics, anatomy and physiology, geology and kindred sciences, and became greatly interested in entomology.

* McCaul: Croft: Forneri; Personalities of Early University Days. By John King, M.A., K.C. The Macmillan Company, St. Martin's House, Bond Street, Toronto. (Price \$1.25).

After three and a half years of steady work, he left the University with every distinction that a student could desire and returned to England in the autumn of 1841.

In the spring of the following year the University of King's College, Toronto, was being organized, the selection of a staff being placed in the hands of the Governor-General, Sir Charles Bagot. A number of eminent scientific men in England, including Professor Faraday, were consulted, and they one and all recommended in the highest terms young Croft for the chair of Chemistry and Experimental Philosophy. He was then but two and twenty years of age.

In January, 1843, Professor Croft arrived in Toronto and at once entered upon his new duties, which he discharged for thirty-six years with the utmost devotion and unqualified success.

It would be out of place to refer to the bitter controversies over University matters that raged for many years in Toronto, and in which Professor Croft took an active and influential part. The abolition of King's College and the establishment of the University of Toronto and University College are matters of Canadian history. In the former Professor Croft became Vice-Chancellor in 1849 and *ex-officio* a member of the University Senate; he was also a member of the College Council, and in both these governing bodies he was zealously interested and exercised important influence.

"In the lecture room"—to quote from the volume referred to above—"he was an admirable expositor and a happy and dexterous demonstrator. Like all good teachers of a rapidly-advancing science, he made his pupils eager for more than he gave them. In a far wider sphere than his lecture-room he, more than any other teacher in Canada, simplified and legitimately popularized chemistry, and he may be said to have laid the foundation of our educational system of practical chemistry and the admirable methods of illustration in chemical research and analysis."

He did not, however, confine his energies to the laboratory and lecture-room, but took an active interest in many organizations of public importance. He was a leading member of the local agricultural and horticultural societies, and repeatedly drew attention to the intimate relation which chemistry bears to the practical work of both departments.

In Entomology he was especially interested and formed a collection of Coleoptera of the Province, and it was through his interest in this branch of natural history that attracted the writer to him and that led to a warm friendship. My first acquaintance with him was made in 1858 at meetings of the Canadian Institute which I attended as a junior member when a student at Trinity College. Professor Croft treated me with the utmost kindness and helped and encouraged me greatly in the study of Entomology. Through him also I came to know the late Dr. William Saunders, Director of the Experimental Farms of the Dominion, who was a life-long and deeply esteemed friend.

In 1862 our devotion to the collection and study of insects arose to such a height that we thought the time had come for drawing together all those in Canada who were of similar tastes and forming a society for mutual help and encouragement. Professor Croft warmly approved of the scheme and, through his influence and that of his colleague, Professor Hincks of the Botanical Department, the Society was duly launched in the spring of 1863.

The following account is given by Mr. King in his memoir:—
“Professor Croft was very honourably identified with a Society which was brought into existence chiefly through his instrumentality, and whose laudable objects are closely associated with the progress of skilled husbandry everywhere, namely, the Entomological Society of Ontario. He was the founder, or at least one of the founders, of this Society; the first meeting of its originators was held at his residence, and its present standing and widely acknowledged usefulness are largely due to his fostering care, warm advocacy, and powerful support. In disseminating information in regard to the insect pests of the agriculturist and horticulturist, as well as to insects friendly to their products, the Society has performed a work of vital service. Its admirable collections at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, comprising 86 cases filled with thousands of specimens carefully classified and named, attracted universal attention, and were far in advance of any other exhibit of the kind in the whole Exhibition. The economic worth of such collections can be estimated only by those who have given some attention to the subject; they form a groundwork upon which may be built up observations of great value, and

must have the effect of stimulating intelligent research in this important department of natural science."

"Within comparatively recent years the bounty of the Government has greatly assisted the operations of this Society. Its periodical publications, ranging over many years, contain a vast amount of original matter, recording valuable observations of a most instructive character on insects in all parts of Canada. These publications have been much sought after, both in Europe and America; some of the early numbers have been reprinted in order to meet the demand, and complete sets of the Society's works are now found in many prominent scientific libraries on both continents."

This quotation from the work of a barrister, who is not particularly interested in natural science, is highly appreciated testimony to the usefulness and value of the Society which Professor Croft was largely instrumental in founding.

Another Society which owed much in its origin and early years to the fostering care and enthusiastic support of Professor Croft, one of its founders, is the Canadian Institute of Toronto, now by warrant of His Majesty King George entitled to the prefix of *Royal*. Twice Professor Croft was elected President and for a long series of years he was a member of its Council and regular attendant at its meetings. Its periodical, "The Canadian Journal," received many contributions on chemical subjects from his pen. He was not, however, a voluminous writer, and it is much to be regretted that his stores of experience and research were not rendered available to students in a permanent form. His work on *Analytical Chemistry for the use of students in Arts and Medicine* was long employed as a text-book, and was an evidence of what he might have done in the field of scientific authorship, had he been so inclined.

In these days of terrible war it is interesting to know that Professor Croft took an active part in the formation of the Canadian Volunteer force, which was brought into being during the winter of 1861-62, when there seemed to be imminent danger of an armed conflict between this country and the United States in consequence of the "Trent affair." Professor Croft called a meeting of students and ex-students at the University and excited

the large gathering by a rousing speech to form an active rifle corps. He was at once elected Captain and the ranks were speedily filled. "The University Rifle Corps" was firmly established and soon attained a high degree of efficiency. Subsequently it formed a part of the famous Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto and bore a share in the engagement with the Fenians at Ridgeway in June, 1866, when three of its undergraduate members were killed and several wounded.

Years went by, each one filled with steady work and each adding to the esteem in which the Professor was held by many successive generations of students and by the public at large. At length, his health began to fail and the strong, vigorous man found that he could no longer sustain the burden of his University work, and that the time had come for his retirement. In 1879 he resigned the Professorship that he had so long and so ably filled, and removed with his family to Las Hermanitas, near San Diego, in Texas. There he spent a few pleasant years of rest and quiet and died on March 1st, 1883. Seven years later a Protestant Episcopal Church was erected in San Diego by his children and dedicated to his memory and that of their mother. At the University of Toronto his name is commemorated by the portrait in the Senate Chamber (from which our photograph is taken) and the beautiful round building now known as "The Croft Chapter House," which for many years was his laboratory and the centre of his work. In the words of his biographer, "It was there that his hundreds of students were initiated into the mysteries of his favourite science, and learned those lessons of patient enquiry and minute observation which are invaluable in the lifework of every man. Those who in times past were his pupils and found delight in his scientific investigations will not soon forget his enthusiastic zeal, his enlarged acquaintance with the literature of his department, his kindly interest in all amongst his friends and followers who manifested a regard for his favourite studies."

"He retired from his field of work with a consciousness of duty well done, and with the gratitude which is certain to follow one who, after a long term of public service, has finished a work which has been carried on with conscientious fidelity and far-reaching success."

C. J. S. BETHUNE.