



Thomas Jeffery Parker (who was known as Jeffery) was born in London, England, on 17 October 1850, the eldest son of Elizabeth Jeffery and her husband, William Kitchen Parker, a medical practitioner and noted zoologist and naturalist. He was educated at Clarendon House

School in London and at the University of London, where he graduated BSc. His father's expertise in comparative anatomy brought the family in close contact with T. H. Huxley, the eminent public defender of Charles Darwin's theses. This association was enhanced when Parker attended the Royal School of Mines where Huxley was professor of natural history. The influence of Huxley was to have a profound effect on Parker's approach to science teaching and on his philosophical outlook. When Huxley died, Parker wrote: 'As one listened to him one felt that comparative anatomy was indeed worthy of the devotion of a life, and that to solve a morphological problem was as fine a thing as to win a battle.'

In 1872, at Huxley's request, Parker accepted the demonstratorship in biology at the Royal School of Mines. By then, having more classroom space, Huxley was able to initiate practical classes. This was a new development in biological education, the execution of which was left largely to Parker. In the course of eight years, during which Parker developed both as a teacher and as an organiser, many came under his influence who were to attain prominence in the field of biology.

Jeffery Parker married Charlotte Elizabeth Rossell in Bramley, Yorkshire, on 23 December 1874. In 1880 he was appointed professor of biology at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, succeeding F. W. Hutton. His duties included curatorship of the Otago Museum. Under his direction both the department of biology and the museum were developed along sound scientific lines, and the university also benefited from his advice on administrative matters. His high standing as a biologist shed lustre on the university in which he taught for 17 years.

Parker was held in high regard as a teacher. His lectures, illustrated with well-executed blackboard drawings, were logical and clear, and his practical classes a great success. He was a strong advocate of postgraduate study, encouraging a number of his more able students to undertake research. His contributions to university administration included improvements to the degree regulations, establishment of the format of the university calendar, the design of the first diploma course at the university (that of the School of Mines), and the implementation of constitutional reforms.

As curator of the Otago Museum Parker showed an exceptional talent both in the arrangement of the collections and in the preparation of additional specimens for exhibition and study. Notable among the techniques he perfected was a glycerine jelly method for the preservation of cartilaginous skeletons. It is testimony to Parker's skill in this area that many of his preparations remain in a perfect state of preservation; some continue to be used as teaching aids at the University of Otago.

Parker produced over 40 scientific papers, all of a high standard. Several represented research on unique New Zealand animals such as the tuatara, takahe, and a number of moa and kiwi species. He was also responsible for a series of highly acclaimed textbooks. *A course of instruction in zootomy (Vertebrata)* appeared in 1884 and was quickly adopted as a laboratory manual. *Lessons in elementary biology* (1891) was a successful introduction to the general principles of biology. His major work, written in collaboration with Professor W. A. Haswell of the University of Sydney, was *A text-book of zoology* (1897) in two volumes. He corrected the final proofs just before his death. At that time he was also collaborating with his brother, William Newton Parker, professor of zoology at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cardiff, on *An elementary course of practical zoology*; this work was published under joint authorship in 1900.

It is not surprising, given his close association with and admiration for T. H. Huxley, that Parker held strong views on the importance of biology in science education and to education in general, and on the pivotal role the concept of evolution should play in biology. These views were outlined in his inaugural lecture at the University of Otago. In venturing to insist on the importance of evolution, he periodically raised the ire of many of Dunedin's citizens, some of whom vented their opposition in the local newspapers. His most vehement opponent was the pamphleteer and well-known eccentric J. G. S. Grant, who was impelled to publish a pamphlet in which he described evolution as 'the blackest form of materialism'.

Parker was influential beyond the walls of the university. He was president of the Dunedin Savage Club, and held office in the Otago Institute, being secretary for eight years and president for one. His unassuming manner and artistic and musical tastes endeared him to a wide circle of friends. Honours came his way; he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1888 and a fellow of the Linnean Society of London shortly before his death. In 1892 he was granted the degree of DSc by the University of London.

In his final years Parker suffered from diabetes. Severe illnesses in 1895 and 1897 left him frail. The end came on 7 November 1897 at Warrington, while he was returning to Dunedin from Shag Valley. Charlotte Parker, whose loss affected him greatly, had died about 1892, and in his last years he and their three sons were cared for by his eldest sister. His death at the age of 47 was a severe loss to the world of biological science.

Thomas Jeffery Parker is buried in the beautiful churchyard of St Barnabas Anglican Church, Warrington, Dunedin

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