

## Alfred Charles Tipple, 1850 – 1887

by Brian Stevenson, Kentucky, USA

An amateur microscopist and slide maker, Alfred Tipple produced and traded microscope slides for about 13 years, between ca. 1874 and his early death at the age of 36, in 1887. Tipple's mounts of foraminifera were well regarded by his colleagues in the Quekett Microscopical Club. As did many other Victorians, Tipple appears to have a keen interest in parasitic insects and other blood-sucking arthropods. He also exhibited a variety of other specimens to the Club, and offered such in exchange to other microscope enthusiasts.



**Figure 1.** Microscope slides prepared by A.C. Tipple. He clearly used the same printer as did fellow Quekett Microscopical Club member Henry E. Freeman, an example of whose slides is shown on the far right. The word “botanical” was undoubtedly added to the two leftmost slides by a later owner, as Tipple would have known that the sea urchin *Cidaris* is an animal.

Arthur Charles Tipple was born November 17, 1850 in Clapham, Surrey, England. His father, Charles, was a surgeon and apothecary (pharmacist/chemist). Within a month or two after Alfred's birth, the family moved to Baldock, Hertfordshire, where Charles established a practice. Arthur's parents died while they were fairly young: his mother, Eleanor, passed away in 1870 at the age of 47, and his father died in 1874 when 53.

Arthur became a clerk, specializing in law. The 1871 census recorded the 20 year-old as living with an uncle's family in Hornsey, Middlesex (London area). The uncle, Henry Marshall was then “clerk to the Curates Augmentation Fund”, and held similar jobs through most of his life. It is possible that Arthur learned some of the business of clerking from his uncle. If so, one hopes he did not learn too much. Uncle Henry was convicted of embezzlement in 1878, and spent 7 years in prison.

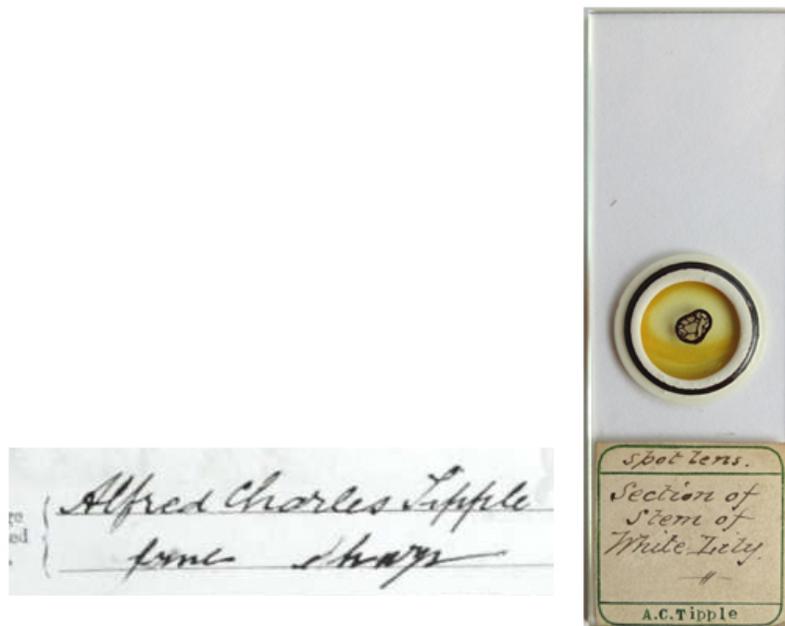
The first record of Arthur Tipple's interest in microscopy is an 1874 exchange advertisement in *Hardwicke's Science-Gossip* (Figure 2). His offer of slides of “parasite of partridge” suggests

that he was a bird hunter.

- 1874** PARASITE of Partridge, for other well-mounted Parasites. —A. C. Tipple, 16, Ennis-road, Finsbury-park, N.
- 1884** FORAMINIFERA, selected and well mounted in exchange for foraminiferous material, parasites, &c.—A. C. Tipple, 35 Alexander Road, Upper Holloway, N.  
WANTED, Stylopæ, various species. Well-prepared slides of rare Acari in exchange.—H. E. Freeman, 60 Plinsoil Road, Finsbury Park, N.
- 1885** FORAMINIFERA material (good) wanted in exchange for well-mounted slides of horn and hoof sections, selected foraminifera, &c.—A. C. Tipple, 35 Alexander Road, Upper Holloway, N.

**Figure 2.** Exchange advertisements from 'Hardwicke's Science-Gossip'. These are all the known advertisements published by A.C. Tipple. He evidently emphasized foraminifera, parasites and horns/hooves – excellent polariscope objects. Coincidentally, Tipple's sole 1884 exchange offer was printed adjacent to one by his microscopy colleague, H.E. Freeman.

Alfred married Jane Sharp on August 21, 1877. From his signature on their parish marriage record, we see an example of Alfred's normal handwriting (Figure 3). The block handwriting on his microscope slide labels, with swooshes and other affectations, was fairly common at the time. Similar letter formations are frequently seen on slides produced by Henry Freeman, William Firth and many other contemporary makers.



**Figure 3.** To the left is Alfred Charles Tipple's signature from the parish record of his 1877 marriage. Tipple's cursive is strikingly different from the stylized block handwriting he used on slide labels, such as that shown on the right and in Figure 1. The block printing would surely have been easier for other microscopists to read.

The 1874 slide exchange offer (Figure 2) located Tipple at 16 Ennis Road, Finsbury Park, London. He was still at that location when he married in 1877. By the time of the 1881 census,

Alfred, Jane and two toddler daughters lived at 1 Monsell Villas, Monsell Road, in Islington. With them lived Jane's widowed mother and her elder brother, a driver with the Royal Artillery.

Alfred Tipple joined the Quekett Microscopical Club on May 23, 1884. The following week, at a special exhibition meeting, he displayed a slide of *Lagena* foraminifera. At about the same time, Tipple published his second known exchange request, asking for "foraminiferous material, parasites, &c." and offering in exchange slides of "selected and well mounted" foraminifera (Figure 2). On February 27, 1885, Tipple donated six slides of foraminifera to the Quekett Club. These were apparently exceptional preparations, as the Club minutes reported that "The Secretary having called special attention to the very beautiful series of slides of Foraminifera presented by Mr. Tipple .. special votes of thanks were passed, on the motion of the President". These were probably similar to the arranged foraminifera slides shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Two examples of Tipple's well-regarded mounts of foraminifera. Screen shots from internet auctions.

Tipple exhibited additional slides to the Quekett throughout 1885. There was a diversity of specimen types, including "Parasite of Crane", "Chelifer museorum" and "Section, Ovary of Orchid". That year also brought the third, and last, known exchange request from Tipple (Figure 2). He again requested foraminiferous material, but added sectioned animal horns and hoofs to his repertoire of offerings. The slides shown in Figure 1 include a cross-section of a *Cidaris* spine (although someone noted "botanical" on the label, *Cidaris* is an animal, being a type of sea urchin). Alfred Tipple clearly developed skills in making many disparate types of slides, from precisely arranging tiny foraminifera to finely grinding sea urchin spines to clearing, flattening and arranging arthropods.

His 1884 and 1885 advertisements, and those years' membership roles of the Quekett Microscopical Club gave Tipple's address as 35 Alexander Road, Upper Holloway. The 1886 Club roster gave the address 19 Stavordale Road, Highbury Hill. The next year, the Tipples had moved again to 1 Chilton Terrace, St. Lawrence, Kent. The reason for these frequent relocations is not known.

Alfred Tipple died on August 15, 1887, when he was only 36 years old. Jane raised their

children alone, and died in 1927.

### **Author's Note**

This and other illustrated biographical essays on early microscopists can also be viewed at the author's web site, <http://microscopist.net>

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Resources**

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*Hardwicke's Science-Gossip* (1884) Exchange offer from A.C. Tipple, Vol. 20, page 24.

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