

OBITUARY NOTICES.

Sir John Jackson, Kt., LL.D. By David Alan Stevenson,
B.Sc., M.Inst.C.E.

(MS. received and read June 21, 1920.)

SIR JOHN JACKSON, the head of the well-known firm of "Sir John Jackson, Limited," was born at York in 1851. Immediately on leaving school he entered workshops in Newcastle to learn the mechanical side of the profession that he was ultimately to follow, and from there he proceeded to Edinburgh University to study science and engineering generally. At the university he came under the influence of the late Professor Tait, and so impressed was he with the value of the training he received in Tait's laboratory that, when Tait died, Sir John founded the "Tait Memorial Fund" to encourage physical research.

At the early age of twenty-five he obtained his first contract, and soon afterwards he was entrusted with the contract for the completion of Stobcross Docks, Glasgow, a difficult and important work involving the sinking of cylinders in soft ground, at that time a novel form of constructing foundations. This was rapidly followed by such important undertakings as Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, and North Sunderland Docks, the extension of the Admiralty Pier at Dover, the completion of the last eight miles of the Manchester Ship Canal, in connection with which he was knighted, the Dover Commercial Harbour, the foundations of the Tower Bridge, docks at Swansea, Methil, and Burntisland, and a deep lock at Barry. The greatest undertaking in this country he was responsible for was undoubtedly the extension of the Admiralty Works at Keyham, a work of peculiar engineering difficulty on account of the great depth to which the foundations had to be carried, which took ten years to complete and cost nearly £4,000,000.

Abroad, no less than at home, he was entrusted with the execution of important undertakings. He constructed the Naval Harbour and Graving Dock at Simon's Town in Cape Colony, important harbour works at Singapore, and a breakwater at Victoria in British Columbia. He advised the Austro-Hungarian Government on the extension of the Arsenal Works at

Pola, and made for the Russian Government surveys and proposals for a second Trans-Siberian Railway, estimated to cost £20,000,000, which was not proceeded with on account of the outbreak of war. For the Spanish Government he constructed the arsenal at Ferrol, for the Chilian Government a metre-gauge railway across the Andes, joining Arica and La Paz in Bolivia, through difficult country with a summit level of 14,000 ft. For the Turkish Government he built the great Hindiad Barrage across the Euphrates, a masonry dam with sluice gates for irrigation, and a navigation lock, which were intended to be the first instalments of a great Mesopotamian scheme, estimated to cost £18,000,000, but which was brought to a stop by the War.

When the question of constructing a bridge over the Channel between Dover and Calais was under discussion, the French engineers who were entertaining the project invited Sir John to confer with them, and he was also consulted in connection with the Nicaraguan Canal scheme. When Messrs D. & C. Stevenson, M.Inst.C.E., brought their scheme for a Forth and Clyde Ship Canal by the Loch Lomond route before him, he entered into it with characteristic energy, and to the end of his life was a strong supporter and able advocate of that scheme. He served on the Royal Commission that was appointed to inquire into the military preparation and other matters connected with the War in South Africa.

When the Great War broke out, he offered his own and his staff's services to the War Office, and his firm were appointed Superintending Engineers to the War Department. Lord Kitchener gave Sir John a practically free hand, with the result that, in an extraordinary short time, quarters for enormous bodies of troops and cavalry were established at such places as Salisbury Plain, Grantham, Purfleet, and Ormskirk, involving the provision of water supplies, electric light installations, roads, railways, sidings, and bridges.

In addition to the knighthood conferred on him in connection with the completion of the Manchester Ship Canal, the University of Edinburgh, his Alma Mater, conferred on him the degree of LL.D. The King of Spain presented him with the Grand Cross of Naval Merit, the Chilian Government with the Order of Merit First Class, and the Duke of Connaught conferred on him the Victorian Order.

He represented Devonport in Parliament as a Unionist from 1910 to 1918, when, Devonport having become a single-member constituency, he resigned his seat.

With such a record of work performed, it is hardly necessary to say that Sir John was a man of great energy and an untiring worker. He

was gifted with strong common sense, which made him an efficient organiser and a sound man of business. He had an extraordinary aptitude for getting down to the bottom of any question that came before him, and for facing and overcoming any difficulty, whether engineering or administrative, that he encountered in the course of his work. He had the faculty of drawing round him men of great ability to assist him in his work, and of getting from them ready and loyal assistance. He was deeply interested in the welfare of his workmen, of whom he often had thousands in his employment at one time.

In a word, he was a great and successful Contractor, and the works he executed will form a worthy and lasting memorial of his useful and busy life.

In his private life his friends found him broad-minded, kind-hearted, and generous. He had a large circle of friends to whom he was fond of extending hospitality when occasion offered, and by whom he will be greatly missed. Rowing, yachting, and small-boat sailing were his favourite pastimes, and he was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron and other yacht clubs.

After the Armistice, Sir John had begun to gather up again the threads of business and prepare for undertaking further large schemes of work, when he died somewhat suddenly on December 14, 1919. He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1894.