

oldest Chairman of a Board of Guardians, probably of any public body in the country. On the formation of the Ulverston Union he was elected to the Chairmanship of the Board at its first meeting in 1836, and was re-elected every succeeding year without a break. During the large portion of each year the duke spent at Holker Hall, he was one of the most regular and assiduous members of the board, and long before the opening of the railway in 1857 he frequently rode across the dangerous sands to attend its meetings. He had a thorough knowledge of the Poor Laws, and his guidance and advice on knotty points with regard to their administration, and close attention to all the details of the business, often proved most valuable. His utterances were marked by conciseness, point, and uniform courtesy and tact. In 1886, when he completed his fiftieth year as Chairman, he was the recipient of two valuable testimonials.

Of his political career little need be said. It was impossible that so cultured an intellect as that of the Duke of Devonshire should not have opinions, and clearly defined ones, on the great problem of government; but they were subordinate to other interests. He was a Liberal, a leading figure in the passing of the great Reform Bill, and up to 1886, a warm admirer and supporter of Mr. Gladstone; he then joined the Liberal Unionist party. Of late years he withdrew from party politics.

The Duke of Devonshire passed away peacefully, from the infirmities of old age, on the 21st of December, 1891. His funeral a few days later in the quiet churchyard of Edensor, though simple and unpretending in the extreme, was not the less notable for the attendance of thousands of his fellow-citizens who desired an opportunity of testifying their respect for a man of worth.

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WILLIAM NEWSHAM BLAIR was born in 1841 in Islay, one of the inner Hebrides Islands, off the coast of Argyll. His father, a substantial farmer and miller, owned property at Dumbarton, Greenock, and Denny, in addition to that in Islay. William was educated at the Parish School, Ballygrant, where he remained until nearly seventeen years of age, when he was articled to Mr. Mackintosh, of Oban, a civil engineer and surveyor. After serving a regular pupilage of nearly four years with that gentle-

man, he became, in 1861, an assistant in the Edinburgh office of Mr. (afterwards Sir) Thomas Bouch. Here, while losing no opportunity of acquiring professional knowledge, he also found time to become well acquainted with general literature, and particularly with Scottish history and poetry.

Finding, on the expiration of his engagement with Mr. Bouch, that there was very little engineering work in Scotland, Mr. Blair sailed for New Zealand in 1863. Shortly after landing at Dunedin he obtained an appointment as Assistant to the late Mr. Paterson, engineer to the province of Otago. Under that gentleman, he carried out many important works, including the Rangitata Road Bridge, the survey of the Dunedin and Clutha Railway, the Port Chalmers Wharf and Waterworks, and the planning of the Otago and Southland Railways. On the death of Mr. Paterson, he succeeded to the office of that gentleman, and, when the Public Works Department of the colony was established, was taken into Government Service and appointed on the 1st of May, 1871, District Engineer for Otago, under Mr. John Carruthers, the Engineer-in-Chief of the Department. In that capacity Mr. Blair constructed the whole of the Government railways, and many of the roads and bridges of the province, and subsequently, as Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, carried out the construction of the Otago Central Railway, which had been laid down by him and which involved heavy and varied works, such as the important and imposing Wingatui Viaduct and other similar structures. When Mr. Macandrew became Minister of Public Works, he divided the colony into two districts, and on the 1st of May, 1878 (Mr. Carruthers having retired), placed Mr. John Blackett and Mr. Blair in charge of the North and Middle Islands respectively. A subsequent change of policy once more brought the colony under the charge of one Chief Engineer, Mr. Blackett, as senior, being appointed to the post, while Mr. Blair was ordered to Wellington, as Assistant Engineer-in-Chief. When Mr. Blackett retired from the position of Engineer-in-Chief in 1889 and came to London as Consulting Engineer to the colony, Mr. Blair performed the duties of that office, and was ultimately appointed, in May, 1890, Engineer-in-Chief, which post he unfortunately held for only twelve months. His health soon began to show signs of failing, and an attack of inflammation of the kidneys completely prostrated him. He was granted leave of absence for a term, and, being unable to resume his duties, it was extended in the hope that further rest might effect a cure. After a time he became much better, and could even leave his bed and take short drives

on fine days; but he suffered a relapse, and the disease ended fatally on the 4th of May, 1891.

Mr. Blair was an original member of the New Zealand Institute, to the Otago branch of which he presented several Papers. He possessed an extensive knowledge of forestry, and in 1879 published a book entitled "Building Materials of Otago and New Zealand generally," which is still a standard work. He was also the author of a useful volume on the industries of the colony, of a description of "The Cold Lakes of New Zealand," and of an article which appeared in the *Zealandia* magazine, on "Artificial Earth Sculpture," showing the effects of travelling-shingle on the coasts. He gave many lectures on the poetry of Scotland, one on the evening before he was taken ill being his last public act. Mr. Blair was loved and respected by his officers, and in private life was the centre of a large circle of friends. Upright, generous, genial, and of a ready wit, he was a warm and true friend and companion, and was ever willing to perform any act of kindness in his power. By his death the colony lost an able, conscientious and hard-working officer. He married, in 1867, a daughter of Mr. Robert Kennedy, banker, of Oban, by whom he had four sons and two daughters.

Mr. Blair was elected a Member of the Institution on the 29th of May, 1877.

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GEORGE FISHER, whose name was prominently connected with the Taff Vale Railway Company for a period of nearly half a century, was born near Chesterfield, in 1809. Proceeding at an early age to America, he was engaged on the works of the Erie Canal, where he acquired much varied practical experience. On returning to England he superintended, in the capacity of Clerk of the Works, the erection of Lord Lisburne's mansion at Crosswood in Cardiganshire, and was subsequently employed for some time on the harbour works at Aberystwith. About the year 1841 he joined the staff of Mr. Bush, then Resident Engineer on the construction of the Taff Vale Railway. On the completion of the works he became General Superintendent and Engineer, and from that time his connection with the Company continued uninterruptedly until his death.

At the time of Mr. Fisher's appointment the Taff Vale system was a single line of about 30 miles in length, and, so far, success