

OBITUARY.

RICHARD HENRY BRUNTON, son of Captain Brunton, R.N., was born in Aberdeenshire in December, 1841. After being educated at private schools in Scotland, the subject of this notice began his engineering career as a pupil, first of Mr. P. D. Brown, and subsequently of Mr. John Willet, of Aberdeen. On the completion of his articles he remained with Mr. Willet as an Assistant, and was employed in that capacity on the construction of the Denburn Valley Railway, the Deeside extension line to Ballater, the Ross-shire extension of the Highland Railway, and the Forfar and Dundee line. Coming to London in 1864, he was engaged for a year in the office of Messrs. Galbraith and Tolmé, on Parliamentary work in connection with the London and South Western Railway, and subsequently for two years as principal Assistant to Mr. Henry Bolden on work for the Midland and other railways.

In April, 1868, on the recommendation of Messrs. David and Thomas Stevenson, of the Scottish Lighthouse Board, Mr. Brunton was appointed Chief Engineer to the Lighthouse Department of the Government of Japan. The treaty negotiated by Lord Elgin with Japan stipulated that the coast should be lighted and buoyed for the safety of general navigation. When Sir Harry Parkes drew the attention of the Japanese Government, in 1868, to this clause, which had not been fulfilled, he was informed that they were perfectly willing to carry out their obligations, but their ignorance and inexperience made them unable to do so without technical advice. Messrs. Stevenson devised a scheme of lighting for the entire coast of Japan, designed the lanterns and apparatus, and had them made under their immediate supervision and sent out to Japan, Mr. Brunton being entrusted with the erection in that country. On his arrival in Japan he found that the work before him was not so simple as building lighthouses in his native country. Sir Harry Parkes persuaded the English admiral then in China to let him have the use of the despatch steamer "Manila," and in that Mr. Brunton and his staff made a tour round the coast of Japan, visiting some twenty sites and making the necessary surveys and calculations. In ten years he had executed fifty lighthouses, and the lighthouse system of Japan

had been modelled by Messrs. Stevenson after the Scottish system. In 1876 he presented to the Institution a valuable Paper entitled "Japan Lights,"¹ for which he was awarded a Telford Premium.

Mr. Brunton further reported on, and made plans for, the removal of the bars at the mouth of the rivers, on which the Japanese Government officials are even yet working. His design for the harbour in Yokohama Bay was thought too expensive by the Government at the time, but that subsequently adopted was on similar lines. He was instrumental in introducing into Japan the telegraph system, and also methods of constructing bridges and buildings to withstand earthquake shocks. It is not too much to say that Mr. Brunton's complete and permanent success in all he undertook for Japan had much to do with the gradual rise of the feelings of respect and admiration with which the Japanese have viewed this country and its institutions.

On his return to England, Mr. Brunton was appointed in 1878 Manager of Young's Paraffin Oil Company, of Glasgow. Three years later he presented to the Institution, as the result of his study of the somewhat complex and intricate processes connected with the destructive distillation of shale and the refinement of products obtained therefrom, a Paper entitled "The Production of Paraffin and Paraffin Oils,"² for which he again obtained a Telford Premium.

In 1881, in partnership with a young friend, Mr. Brunton purchased a manufacturing business producing articles of architectural ornamentation; and this he conducted for fifteen years, acquiring during that period an extensive knowledge, not only of architecture and artistic ornamentation, but also of the details of special classes of buildings, such as theatres, hotels, and large dwelling houses. Subsequently he practised in London as an architect and engineer. Shortly before his death, which took place at 45 Courtfield Road, S.W., on the 24th April, 1901, he completed the MS. of a book entitled "The Awakening of a Nation, being a description of the entry of Japan into the Sisterhood of Nations, with an elucidation of the Character of the People, from personal experience."

Mr. Brunton was a Fellow of the Geological Society, and of the Royal Geographical Society, and a Member of the Society of Arts. He was elected an Associate of this Institution on the 7th April, 1868, and was transferred to the class of Members on the 17th May, 1873.

¹ Minutes of Proceedings Inst. C.E., vol. xlvii. p. 1.

² *Ibid*, vol. lxvi. p. 180.