

MR. ROBERT BERTHON PRESTON, the representative of the ancient family of Preston, of the Manor of Furness, in Lancashire, was born in Liverpool, on the 25th of June, 1820. At four years of age he lost his Father, who died suddenly whilst travelling with his family. This circumstance produced a grave and lasting effect on the mind of the Son; and tended in some degree to form early in life, a character which was afterwards remarkable for independence of thought, decision, and clear judgment. His education, commenced in England, was chiefly received in Geneva; and his frequent residences abroad, not only taught him foreign languages and acquirements, but enlarged his mind, cultivated his naturally high intellect, refined his artistic taste, and, combined with habits of acute observation, helped to store his memory with varied and useful knowledge. There were few subjects on which he could not give information and advice. His strong practical mind and mathematical talents gave him an early taste for mechanical engineering, which he adopted as a profession, on inheriting from his Grandfather, a large share in the iron and brass foundries and works in Liverpool, which he personally superintended for many years. During his connection with the firm of Messrs. Fawcett, Preston and Co., of which he was the principal partner, the machinery for many first-class steamers was designed and constructed for several British and Foreign Companies; among which may be mentioned the engines for the 'Nubia,' the 'Alma,' the 'Orissa,' the 'Behar,' and the 'Ottawa,' for the Peninsula and Oriental Company,—and the 'Simois,' the 'Jourdain,' the 'Borysthène,' and the 'Méandre,' for the Messageries Impériales of France. The firm was also extensively engaged in the manufacture of sugar machinery, most of the largest cane mills and vacuum apparatus in Cuba, the Mauritius, and the British Colonies, having been constructed at their works. Latterly, their attention was also turned to the manufacture of rifled guns and their appurtenances, the locality offering special advantages for experiments. In all matters relative to business, Mr. Preston, when in Liverpool, took an active part, and his sound practical knowledge and clear views upon all engineering subjects, rendered his advice and opinion, at all times, valuable.

Mr. Preston became a Member of the Institution in 1855; he was also a Member of the British Association, and of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, at Birmingham.

He was a Member of the Royal Southern and Mersey Yacht Clubs, and the pleasure he took in that pursuit, led him to study shipbuilding, to which he, latterly, paid great attention, and at the period of his decease, he was about commencing experiments on a large scale, with models constructed by himself. He also greatly interested himself in chemical and microscopical studies.

As a patron of art, Mr. Preston was well known. His refined taste, his practised eye, and his just appreciation of talent, caused him to be sought after, alike by artists and connoisseurs of the highest order. Many of the leading artists of the day were among his friends; and the tinted 'Venus,' perhaps the most finished work of Mr. John Gibson, the Sculptor, was executed expressly for him. The collection of works of modern and antique art formed by Mr. Preston, and still carefully maintained by Mrs. Preston, remains as a proof of his liberality and discernment.

At the time when the energy of his talents and character seemed most to promise a career of usefulness, Mr. Preston, like his father, died suddenly at Gloucester, whilst travelling with his wife, on the 9th April, 1860, at only forty years of age, leaving four children, to whom he has bequeathed a name universally honoured and respected; a memory blessed by the numerous recipients of his bounty; and the example of a noble and upright character, firm yet gentle, talented yet modest, devoting an enterprising spirit to the good of his fellow-men.

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MR. JOHN GEALE THOMSON was born in Dublin about the year 1816, and in the year 1833, he became a pupil of Sir John Macneill, (M. Inst. C. E.,) by whom he was employed on the works of the Great Holyhead Road. In the year 1838, he was engaged under the late Mr. Brunel, (V.P. Inst. C. E.,) on the Great Western Railway, and he superintended, as Resident Engineer, the construction of the works on that line between Bath and Box, including the Middle Hill Tunnel at the latter place. He was then employed in the same capacity, on the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway. He was subsequently appointed Chief Acting Engineer of the Dundalk and Enniskillen Railway, a great portion of which line he set out and constructed, and was afterwards engaged, under Mr. Hemans, (M. Inst. C. E.,) in laying out the Dungannon and Omagh Railway, in the north of Ireland. He next proceeded to St. Petersburg, with Mr. C. E. Austin, (M. Inst. C. E.,) to assist in organising a system of drainage for that city, and then in selecting and laying out a line of railway in the Crimea. It was while thus occupied, that he was seized with illness, under which he rapidly sank. His remains were interred in the cemetery of Perekop, near those of several of his countrymen who fell during the Crimean war.

Mr. Thomson was a man of good abilities, of great industry, and was deservedly esteemed, for the skill and accuracy with which his works were constructed. He was elected an Associate of the Institution in 1834, was transferred to the new class of