

MR. JOHN SCOTT TUCKER, the son of a Naval Surveyor in the service of the Admiralty, was born about the year 1814. He was educated under Dr. Burney at Greenwich, and in 1830 was articled for five years to Sir John Rennie, Past-President Inst. C.E., serving his time at the well-known works in Upper Ground Street, Blackfriars. During his pupilage he was employed for some time on the construction of the new London Bridge. In 1835 he became assistant to Messrs. Walker and Burges, MM. Inst. C.E., for whom he made an elaborate survey of Reculver, and the shore defences at that place, with a view to the acquirement by the Trinity House for a sea-mark of the celebrated ruins of Reculver church. On leaving Messrs. Walker and Burges he was again for some time employed by Sir John Rennie, and was also associated with the late Mr. James Cooper, M. Inst. C.E., in surveying the metropolitan section of the Northern and Eastern (now Great Eastern Railway). He also assisted Mr. (now Sir John) Hawkshaw, Past-President Inst. C.E., in making the test-levels between London and Horsham for the original London and Brighton Railway scheme. This second engagement under Sir John Rennie lasted only two years, but was a busy and exciting era in Mr. Tucker's career, the memorable struggle of the rival schemes for a line to Brighton being at its height. He was also at the Azores, and there surveyed the harbour of Ponte del Garda. In 1839-40 Mr. Tucker was engaged on the Great Western Railway under Mr. Brunel, Vice-President Inst. C.E. About 1841 he went to Bermuda as Clerk of Works for the Admiralty during the building of the docks, and on their completion resumed his engagement under Mr. Brunel, being employed on the Cornwall Railway. The next few years were passed in general engineering work, during which he made another visit to the Azores. From 1848 to 1851 Mr. Tucker was in the service of the Admiralty in charge of naval works at Malta. He then went to South Africa to report on a proposed railway at Cape Town, after which he removed to South America and became Resident Engineer of the Pernambuco Railway, but only remained in Brazil for a year.

In July 1858 Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape, submitted to the Secretary of State the opinion of himself and the Executive Council, that "It would be very desirable that the Council of the Institution of Civil Engineers should be requested to select from the names of candidates such person as they may think best qualified to fill the duties required from the Colonial Engineer." The nomination was accordingly entrusted to the Institution, and

Mr. Scott Tucker was unanimously chosen from among a limited competition of five, the Council being so satisfied with his professional and other qualifications that they did not think it necessary to invite applications from other candidates. Unfortunately, however, long mismanagement had brought the engineer-department at the Cape into thorough disrepute, and Mr. Scott Tucker found himself, from the moment of taking up his appointment, in a very awkward and delicate position. This unsatisfactory state of things continued until a Commission of Inquiry was issued to report on the condition of the public works of the colony. In giving evidence before this body Mr. Tucker, being a man of high honour and despairing of any improvement under the existing organisation, recommended the abolition of the office he himself held. In the result this advice was taken, and in 1873 Mr. Scott Tucker retired on a pension. It is right to add that the Duke of Newcastle, the Home Secretary, put on record the following minute:—

“I am bound to say that I have observed nothing in any part of the evidence taken before the committees of the two Houses of the Cape Parliament to reflect upon Mr. Tucker's character, and it is with much regret that I have felt myself obliged to acquiesce in his removal from an office of which he seems to have been called upon to discharge the duties under very disadvantageous circumstances.

“His case is one which ought to be regarded by the colonial authorities as entitling him to much consideration.”

After this Mr. Scott Tucker had an office in Westminster, and was occupied in various works, principally as a consulting engineer, and he served under the British Commission for the Paris Exhibition of 1867; but to use his own words, the broken nature of his previous employment had put him out of the engineering groove at home, and the stream of professional success flowed past him. His claims to government employment, however, procured him the post of superintendent of Public Works for the Island of Barbadoes, to which he was appointed in 1876. The appointment carried with it a commissionership of lighthouses, and a membership of the Board of Health. He was also made a J.P. of the island. But the climate did not agree with him, and after about four years' service he retired. Compelled to escape from a tropical climate, he landed in England in the midst of the severe winter of 1879–80, and never recovered the shock, although he lingered for more than two years. He died at Dover on the 18th of January, 1882, in his sixty-seventh year.

Mr. Scott Tucker was an amiable and accomplished gentleman ; but he was not endowed with those qualities which lead to high success, apparently lacking stedfastness of character. He was very apt at the draughtsman's board ; while in the office of Messrs. Walker and Burges, he made reduced copies of the contract drawings for Dover Harbour with such skill of execution that they were bound and presented to the Duke of Wellington, who took great interest in that work. But Mr. Tucker was more than a mere draughtsman, being in fact a skilled artist in water colours. He made many very beautiful perspectives of the old Blackfriars and Westminster bridges, and of lighthouses for the Trinity House, and was an exhibitor at the Society of British Artists in 1836, contributing a water-colour entitled "Trefusis Mill." He also produced some vivid sketches of Maltese life and character seen from an English point of view. In 1861, when at the Cape, he organised a corps of Engineer Volunteers, of which he was gazetted Lieutenant-colonel.

He was elected an Associate of the Institution on the 22nd of January, 1833, his certificate bearing the signature of Thomas Telford as chairman of the meeting at which his name was passed ; subsequently he was transferred to the class of Graduate, and was one of the six who alone remained in that grade when it was abolished in 1867. He was then, on the 26th of November of that year, transferred to the class of Member, for which he was supposed to have qualified some thirty years before.

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MR. HENRY ALTY was born in the year 1844, and was educated by the Rev. Canon Fergie, B.D., Vicar of Ince and Honorary Canon of Liverpool, when headmaster of the Wigan Blue-coat School, where Alty was highly commended for his industry and amiability. Mr. Richard Alty, the father, died when his son was only fourteen years of age. On the recommendation of Canon Fergie the son commenced his professional career, in September 1858, as a pupil of the late Mr. John Law Hunter, M. Inst. C.E., then engineer to the Wigan Corporation, in whose office Alty remained till 1865, when he was appointed Assistant-Surveyor to the Halifax Corporation. After this, and previous to his appointment as Borough Engineer and Surveyor at Plymouth, Mr. Alty held the positions of Engineer to the Keighley Local Board of Health, and Borough Surveyor at Barrow-in-Furness. On entering upon his duties at Plymouth, Mr. Alty displayed, for one of his years, considerable ability and tact in dealing with