

## OBITUARY.

ALEXANDER BASSETT, eldest son of the Reverend Alexander Bassett, was born at Great Cheverell in the County of Wilts, on the 28th of April, 1824. He was educated at Marlborough College, and on leaving school was articled to Mr. Thomas Tilbrook, of Horningsham near Warminster, a surveyor and land agent, at that time largely employed in making parish surveys under the Tithe Commutation Act. He remained in Mr. Tilbrook's office for two years, and was afterwards engaged on parliamentary surveys for several projected railways under Mr. Joseph Locke, M.P., Past-President Inst. C.E. He subsequently spent two years in the office of a firm of land agents and railway valuers.

In the spring of 1846, young Bassett was introduced to Mr. W. M. Peniston, M. Inst. C.E., the Resident Engineer, under Mr. Brunel of the Wilts and Somerset Railway. He entered Mr. Peniston's office, and in a few months was appointed assistant engineer on a division of that railway 8 miles in length, including two tunnels, and he retained that appointment until the works were partially stopped. In 1849 he undertook the management of works in connection with the opening of a new colliery near Pontypridd, in Glamorganshire, including the sinking of the pits, and the erection of the machinery; this work occupied him until the autumn of 1850, when he removed to Cardiff, and commenced business as a civil and mining engineer.

In August 1852 he entered into partnership with the late Mr. E. S. Barber, M. Inst. C.E., who, at that time, had a considerable practice as a civil and mining engineer in the counties of Monmouthshire, Glamorganshire and Breconshire. A year later his partner, Mr. Barber, left England, having been appointed by the Eastern Archipelago Company to report on, and direct the operations on, their mineral property in the Island of Borneo, the entire management of the business devolved upon Mr. Bassett. In 1854 the news reached England of Mr. Barber's death at Borneo, thus leaving Mr. Bassett the sole surviving partner. So well and ably had he conducted the many and intricate duties connected

with the several large mineral and other properties under his charge, that in every case the posts held by his partner were conferred on him. He was also appointed County Surveyor for Glamorganshire. His practice now rapidly increased, and extended into the counties of Somersetshire and Gloucestershire, where he acted for several large owners of property. In 1858 and 1859 he acted as Engineer to the Sirhowy Railway Company, and prepared the parliamentary plans for that line (15 miles in length). During the next ten years he was busily engaged in each session of parliament in various schemes for railways, waterworks, &c., either by the promoters or on behalf of the opposition. He was the Engineer of the Cowbridge Railway and of the Pontypridd Waterworks, also joint engineer for the Swansea Vale Railway. He was also frequently engaged in railway and other arbitration cases.

In the spring of 1864 Mr. Bassett's active mind was directed to the great want of better dock accommodation at Newport (Monmouthshire), and of facilities for the development of the enormous mineral wealth of the district; and, as engineer to Lord Tredegar, a large owner of mineral property, he proposed a scheme for new docks on the west side of the River Usk, nearer the mouth of the river than the old docks, and on his lordship's property. His ideas were very favourably entertained; and, at his recommendation, Mr. James Abernethy, Past-President Inst. C.E., was called on to report on the project, with the result that parliamentary plans were deposited that year; the Act was obtained after considerable opposition, and the Alexandra (Newport) dock and railways were constructed and opened in 1875, Mr. Bassett being the Acting Engineer and Mr. Abernethy, the Engineer-in-Chief. These works have proved very successful, and their opening marked a new era in the commercial prosperity and history of Newport.

Mr. Bassett was elected a Member of this Institution on the 6th of March, 1860. He was a member also of the North of England Institute of Mining Engineers, and of the South Wales Institute of Engineers, of the establishment of which he was an active promoter. He was elected a member of its first council, and later on occupied the presidential chair.

The utilization of small coal, long considered of little or no value, and for which scarcely any sale could be found, was a question that Mr. Bassett considered of material importance and one that deserved much more attention than it received. He spent much time and money in carrying out exhaustive experiments in the manufacture of "Patent Fuel" made from small coal by several processes, and

in its trials in the furnaces of locomotive and stationary engines. He was appointed a borough magistrate for Cardiff in 1868. He took an active interest in several charitable organizations to which he devoted much of his time and means. His kindly disposition and love of children was perhaps at no time more apparent than on the occasions of the annual treat he gave to the children of the Industrial Schools, when they were entertained in the grounds of his residence at Llandaff; on these occasions he entered thoroughly into their amusements and games. In character he was frank and truthful, highly honourable, and just in all his dealings, a man in whom his many clients and friends had—and rightly had—the fullest confidence. To the end of his career he pursued the same honoured course, resolved to do his duty to God and man.

Failing health induced Mr. Bassett to remove to Torquay for the winter of 1878, the subsequent winters of 1880 and 1881 were spent at Mentone. The benefit he received from wintering abroad was not of a permanent nature, and on the advice of his physician he afterwards resided at Bournemouth for three years, where he succumbed from severe attacks of bronchial asthma and weakness of the heart on the 8th of April, 1887, at the age of sixty-three.

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JOHN BOWER was born at Downpatrick, co. Down, Ireland, on the 8th of December, 1818. His father, William Bower, a native of Banffshire, had been a pupil of Mr. Fleming, of Glasgow; but coming to Ireland in 1809 had settled in Downpatrick, where he married in 1814, Sarah, daughter of John Graham, an eminent mathematician of that day, who had been appointed by the Bishop of Down Diocesan schoolmaster, and to whom young Bower, also a mathematician, had been attracted by similarity of tastes and studies. John was the third child of this marriage—a remarkably quick, active, and clever boy. After being educated by his grandfather, he served the usual time of pupilage under his father, and soon became wonderfully proficient—a providential thing for him; for, having in 1839 lost his father by sudden death, he had at a very early age to take on himself the sole whole charge of his mother and her large young family—his father, through some unsuccessful mining speculations, having been unable to leave sufficient provision for them. This charge he nobly and willingly undertook and carried out, devoting himself wholly to it, and never marrying that he might the more