

## PROFESSOR JOHN PERRY, F.R.S.

General Treasurer.

Professor Perry has climbed the scientific ladder from lowest rung to topmost round. He is today one of the greatest of living mechanical engineers, and in the teaching of engineering mathematics he has created something of a revolution. What educationists have not heard of the "Perry



movement?" Born at Garvagh, Ireland, in 1850, of Scotch-Irish parentage, a combination par excellence for the breeding of virile stock, the youthful Perry spent the first ten years of his life upon a farm. Then he went to school in Belfast, where a caning became his daily portion, as he could not, or would not, prepare his lessons. However, the canings suddenly ceased when he gained a silver medal for proficiency in natural science in competition with boys many years older than himself. At the age of 14 young Perry took a position as apprentice in the drawing office and pattern shops of a foundry near Belfast. He attended night schools and after gaining a number of prizes, went, in 1868, to Manchester on the chance, poor enough as it seemed, of gaining an exhibition. He gained the exhibition and matriculated at Queen's College, Belfast, the same year.

In 1870 young Perry graduated in the then Queen's University of Ireland as bachelor of engineering, gaining many honors, a gold medal and several money prizes in the meantime. Working at college during the winter he spent the summers in the fitting and blacksmiths' shop of the foundry, where he had served his apprenticeship. The next four years he spent as assistant master in physics at Clifton College, where he built the first school physics laboratory to be erected in England. We find Perry in 1874, when but 24 years of age, one of the secretaries of the Mathematical and Physical Science section of the British Association. The same year he became Thomson scholar at Lord Kelvin's laboratory, Glasgow, acting as the latter's assistant till 1875, when he left Great Britain for Japan. There for four years, from 1875-79, he taught civil engineering at the Imperial College of Engineering of Yeddo.

On his return to England he devoted himself to inventing and to giving expert advice in electrical engineering. At Westminster, among other things, he superintended the reorganization of an engineering establishment where he introduced large tools, and machinery for covering wire with gutta percha. In a lecture to the Society of Arts on "The Future Development of Electrical Appliances," he first pointed out the importance of burning fuel as zinc is burnt in a voltaic cell. He also described a method of transmitting the images of moving objects electrically through wires. The lecture contained many other remarkable suggestions, some of which have since been carried into practical use. In 1881 he arranged the system of examination in mechanical engineering of the city and Guilds of London Institute. In the following year he became professor of applied mechanics and engineering in the City and Guilds of London Technical College, Finsbury. He held that position until 1896.

In 1896 Professor Perry received his present appointment, that of professor of mechanics and mathematics in the Royal College of Science, South Kensington. Here he is chairman of examiners in the seven engineering subjects and as such controls the studies of some 100,000 students. He has also examined at other universities, in fact he has examined and taught every kind of student: gilded youths and the sons of the poor, apprentices, working men and Japanese students. Some of