

In Memoriam

The Late John H. McLaren, Esquire.

Manager Royal Insurance Co'y.

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THE LATE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE ROYAL

By the death of Mr. JOHN HAGART McLAREN, the General Manager of the Royal Insurance Company, the insurance world has sustained one of those great and sudden losses which seem for a time to shake its fabric by removing a corner stone, and even to paralyze for the moment the progress of events. Though men may come and men may go, the world, indeed, must go on for ever; but at the departure of a great leader from the stage upon which he has played a conspicuous part even the hurrying world seems for a brief space to pause to look back. Such a leader was the late General Manager of the Royal, and such is the sensation of a pause in the march of affairs that the news of his sudden death, which we have with the deepest regret to announce this week, has produced. It is difficult to accustom ourselves to an insurance world in which Mr. J. H. McLaren is no longer an acknowledged chief—difficult to realise that the man who a week ago was an impelling force in insurance business, the impersonation of the financial pre-eminence and world-wide reputation of the Royal, is to-day only a memory and a name. The fact that first of all impresses us is that the aristocracy of insurance is the poorer by the loss of one of its foremost representatives; the men who stand in the front rank must be few, and the late General Manager of the Royal leaves a vacant place in that rank which not many are competent to fill. But intimately associated with our reflections of what insurance business has lost by Mr. McLaren's death is our recollection of what it has gained by his life. In another column we reprint from a contemporary, whose detailed notice conveys to us some idea of the esteem in which the late General Manager of the Royal was held in the great commercial centre where the chief work of his life was done, an account of the deceased leader's long and honorable career. There is, perhaps, nothing to add to the simple statement of facts. Since his exceptional business capacity and indomitable energy brought the junior clerk of the Hercules Insurance Company rapidly and certainly to the front, Mr. McLaren has passed his business life on a public stage, and can seldom have escaped to brief retirement from the full blaze of the lime-light. He has filled the stage long and worthily, and, while we regret his death, we must admit that there seemed few fresh laurels for him to win. It is in truth his own fireside and his wide circle of friends—amongst whom we were proud to be numbered—who have most to mourn his loss, for he had accomplished the work of more than a lifetime for insurance business, and even the control of the vast operations of the Royal could hardly have de-

tained him long from a well-earned leisure. Leisure, however, has been denied him by destiny, and he has died, as he had lived for over half-a-century, a man of the insurance world.

The early events of Mr. McLaren's history—his rapid advance through the various stages of his profession to a position of responsibility in the Lancashire Insurance Company, his first connection with the Royal in 1856, when he was appointed Assistant-Secretary of the company, and his subsequent promotion to the Sub-Managership and finally his appointment, in 1868, to succeed Mr. Percy M. Dove, in the general managership—we have laid before our readers elsewhere, and his later history is written in the remarkable annals of the Royal Insurance Company during the last quarter of a century. Such a record as that which has raised the Royal from a fire-office of comparative obscurity to the premier institution in the world is one upon which it is given to few men to look back, and the record is peculiarly Mr. McLaren's own. Of the Royal as it stands to-day, its late General Manager might have said "*le Royal; c'est moi*," for the insurance world with one consent identified the success of the company with its manager. That he has enjoyed the assistance of a staff second to none in the world, of an organisation of unsurpassed efficiency, of a powerful directorate, and of an influential and sympathetic body of shareholders, inspired like himself with a clearly defined purpose—all this is an additional tribute to Mr. McLaren's great qualities of leadership. Never, perhaps, did a man work under better auspices, but the auspices must have been largely of his own making. The Royal seems to have realised from the first that large reserves would be the basis of fire insurance business of the future. Dividends, therefore, were placed second to reserve, and the prudent co-operation of the shareholders gave Mr. McLaren the chance of which he was not slow to avail himself. Constant consolidation and well-timed amalgamations have been the leading principles of the policy which gave the Royal steadily increasing weight, and at length by the absorption of the Queen placed it first among fire offices in magnitude and resources. The history of the Royal is, as we have said, the later history of the young junior clerk of 1842, and it is one in which every junior among us must find absorbing interest. Of the future it is early to think, but in closing our tribute to the late chief it is well to remember that his rare insight was in no way more happily shown than in the association with himself of able coadjutors. As regards the leadership of the Royal we can have little anxiety; the world had never perhaps more capable insurance men than it has to-day. But for the time the paramount fact is that the man who had won almost a regal title in the business is dead.