THE LATE THOMAS COLTRIN KEEFER, C.E.

The death occurred on Thursday, January 7th, 1915, of Mr. T. C. Keefer, C.M.G., C.E., LL.D., at his late residence, The Manor House, Rockcliffe, Ottawa, Ont., in his 94th year. The remains were interred on Saturday at Beachwood Cemetery, Ottawa.

Thomas Coltrin Keefer was born at Thorold, Ont., in 1821, and spent his boyhood days in that section of the country where he was destined to return in later years and take a prominent part in the construction of one of the then foremost engineering feats, the Welland Canal. His grandfather, George Keefer, of the village of Paulinskill, New Jersey, fell in the War of Independence, while fighting under the command of Sir William Howe. His father, in 1790, at the age of 18, followed on foot an Indian trail from Paulinskill to Lake Erie, reaching a village to be afterwards known as Buffalo, and, crossing the Niagara River, settled in the neighboring peninsula. There, with a number of other United Empire Loyalists, he founded the village of Thorold. The mother was a daughter of Edward McBride, who represented the town of Niagara in the Parliament of Upper Canada. Thomas C. Keefer was a member of a family of ten sons and five daughters.

His early education was received at Upper Canada College, Toronto, and his graduation was followed by an immediate participation in engineering work, at the age of seventeen, on the staff of the Erie Canal. Later, he became associated with the Welland Canal construction, and, in 1845, was made chief engineer of improvements works on the Ottawa River. Many of his early designs are still in evidence among the lumber industries of that river.

In 1848 he married Elizabeth, daughter of the late Hon. Thomas McKay, M.L.C., of Rideau Hall, Ottawa. A year later, while still a comparatively young man, one of his most important publications, entitled "The Philosophy of Railways" appeared, evidencing to all who read his mastery of the pen as of the theodolite, and the profound depth of his zeal and whole-souled devotion to the development of his native country. Naturally, his book greatly influenced the governmental policy regarding the construction of railways in Canada.

In the following year, 1850, he entered the service of the Government to make a survey of the rapids of the St. Lawrence with a view to the improvement of its navigation, by the exploration of easier and safer routes, and with a view also to the construction of a canal or railway between the St. Lawrence and the Upper St. John waters of Lake Temiscouata. In the same year he won Lord Elgin's prize by virtue of his book entitled "The Influence of the Canals of Canada on Her Agriculture."

He assisted in the preparation of reports on the trade of British North America, and his knowledge and grasp of the commercial situation were such as to be very instrumental later in the drafting of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1884.

While the First International Exhibition was in progress in London, 1851, Mr. Keefer officiated as Commissioner for Canada. He visited London in the same capacity in 1862, while in 1878, he was Executive Commissioner at the Paris Exposition, where he served on the international jury of engineering and architecture. At this time he was elected an officer in the Legion of Honor (France) and made a companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, by her Majesty, the late Queen Victoria.

After his investigation of the St. Lawrence for the Government, he engaged in preliminary surveys for the Grand Trunk Railway of the line between Montreal and Toronto. He also prepared a report and plans for bridging the St. Lawrence at Point St. Charles, and from his report and designs, the Victoria bridge was built. Subsequently, he was employed on the construction of the waterworks systems for Ottawa, Hamilton, and Montreal. He designed and built Montreal's first aqueduct, and in 1874-75, as chief engineer to the Ottawa Waterworks Commission, he laid out and constructed the Ottawa system. He afterwards served for a number of years as engineer to the Montreal Harbor Commission.

While devoting this period of his life to municipal works, he did not cease to take the keenest interest in railway development, and it was largely owing to his efforts that the change was effected from narrow gauge track to the present standard gauge on Canadian railways.

Space will permit but a brief summary of his many attainments in the more mature years of his life. Among those meriting distinguishable mention are his appointments as chairman of the Royal Commission on Ice Floods; member of the International Deep Waterways Commission; fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, to which he was elected member in 1881, vice-president in 1897 and president in 1898. In 1877 he became a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, which he served for two periods as vice-president, and as president in 1888. He was president of the Rideau Club of Ottawa in 1881. He was also a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers of Great Britain. So well known has been his association with the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, that there exists small need of detailed mention here. He was one of its founders and was honored by the presidency in 1887 and a second time in 1897.

The late Mr. Keefer suffered the loss of his first wife in 1870. To them had been born a family of six, of which Mr. C. H. Keefer, consulting civil engineer, Ottawa, is a member. In 1873 the deceased engineer married the widow of the late Mr. John McKinnon, Ottawa,

Mr. Keefer's last public appearance in Ottawa was as an honorary member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, when that Society held its summer convention at the Capital in June, 1913. During the convention he threw open his house and grounds at Rockcliffe to its members and to the invited guests from its sister organization, the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers. The quiet garden party held among the pleasant and recreative surroundings, the congenial welcome tendered to all by the veteran engineer, and the unassuming hospitality which was given to the engineers of the two countries to enjoy in company with each other, are memories which will not soon be forgotten. The event, skillfully planned and executed by himself, afforded opportunity of mutual benefit to the officials of both societies. No more need be said than that those fortunate enough to have been present, carried away with them an esteem for the since departed engineer that time will take long to obliterate.