

JNO. C. FERGUSON.

By "PROCTOR."

THE announcement in the evening papers of Thursday, Aug. 20th, that J. C. Ferguson, Chief Engineer of the Toronto waterworks was dead, came to his large circle of mechanical friends with all the soreness of a personal bereavement.

It was known to some of them that he had been unwell—to a few that he was very ill—but to the great majority who had heard nothing of his indisposition (and who knew of his anxiety to have everything right, and his close attention to his duties, and were therefore not surprised at not seeing him on the streets occasionally), it was quite an unexpected paragraph.

I have known him both as a mechanic, a student, and a Christian gentleman for upwards of twelve years past, and I deem it due to your readers—and especially the younger men with aspirations that I should give a few "points" out of his life history.

I write under my old *nom de plume* because it brings back to me pleasant memories of the times when he used to criticize my "Proctor's Points," and take great delight in pleasantly disputing my theories.

To mechanics who were not personally acquainted with him, it was a matter of some surprise that he came out at "the head" in the crucial examination through which the applicants for the position of waterworks engineer had to pass in 1887, but to some of us who knew him as a careful, critical student in mechanical matters, as an engineer who accepted no theory or method unless it would bear the fullest investigation, who knew that, in his own way, his head was well stored and skilful with facts, figures and formulas, as his hands were expert in fitting, it was no surprise that he demonstrated his ability to fill the position.

His close attention to the duties and obligations of the engineership, his almost morbidly conscientious anxiety, lest by any slip on his part there should be a failure in the city's water supply, and the watchful care required both day and night, were just a little too great a burden for him. This burden was added to when, lacking the assistance of his assistant, Mr. Kilby—who is now soon to follow him—some stupid bungling fellows drove a spile through the intake pipe at the island, and let a flood of sand into it that day after day was slowly but surely grinding the cylinders and pistons of his pumps, so that they at last were not capable of doing much more than half duty.

Just at this time, too, with all this burden and anxiety upon him, some "Daniel come to judgment," seeking for a kind of fish-wife notoriety by fault finding, in the press and at the council board, said a number of things that seemed to reflect on his department, every word of which, though entirely undeserved, hurt him like the sting of a Russian knout, and he simply broke down under the combined pressure.

It was hoped that a few months rest might restore him to usual vigor, but he came home two months ago after a two months absence only to find himself unable to give any further attention to his duties, and went to his quiet home to die, as he had lived, a true man.

I remember the first time I saw him. In the winter of '78, I think, passing through one of our city machine shops in a leisurely way, looking at the men at work, I noticed a tall, well-built, athletic workman, chipping on a machine casting. The man himself attracted me first—he was working as if he meant to get his job done on time. But the swing of that hammer! I never saw but one other man who could swing a chipping hammer with John Ferguson. On the occasion referred to I remarked to the owner of the shop that he had one first-class hand upstairs. "Oh, yes," said he, "but I pay him good wages." "How much?" "\$3.50 per day; but," he added, "he's worth it." Ordinary vise hands were worth \$1.75 to \$2.00 a day.

In those days he engineered on a lake steamer in the summer and wrought as a journeyman machinist in the winter. Every spare moment was spent in study. Lane after lane was taken up and gone into as thoroughly as if it were an absolute necessity that he should master both elementary principles and mechanical construct on hydraulics, steam engineering, bridge work, machine building, marine work, etc., etc.

It became fully known, early in the "eighties," that anything he did was done well, and he always had a choice of situations. The only reason why he did not attain to special prominence was simply the lack of any important mechanical enterprises in Canada. His remodelling of the large pumping plant, and the complete efficiency obtained, justified the confidence of his friends in his mechanical ability.

He was always gentle, quiet and reserved in his intercourse with others, and whether as journeyman or master mechanic, kind, considerate and helpful to all around him. In his personal and private life he was ever—since I have known him—a consistent, earnest Christian. Reticent almost to a fault sometimes, it is yet true that he spoke very freely to those who came in heart-touch with him, of religious matters. No man could buy or sell him. He lived above the petty ambition of private gain out of public

relationships. I well remember the indignant scorn which flashed in his face as he told me of some fellow who—not knowing him—offered to pay him a commission on all the goods he sold to the city, if he would recommend the goods. I interrupted him in his narration by interjecting the question:—"What did you tell him, John?" "Tell him," said he, straightening up, "I fired him out of the office!"

Just passing out of his manhood's prime, sooner than some of us, he has entered that other and higher realm where force hath origin, where system and order have their source, where law is eternal, and life and being but the pulsing of the Infinite.

Not the *dying* but the *living* with its trusting,—

With its motives, broad and ample, and its purpose strong and deep—
Measures up the worth of being. All adjusting
Is with One who knows the balance and doth righteous record keep.

Every beating brain and throbbing heart are factors

In the mystic revelations of the hidden and unknown,

And each toiling hand is helper. But the "Actors"—

Never thinking, loving, doing—live for self and earthalone.

They who *knock* at Wisdom's portals, in rogation,

Have the promise, she will "open" and reveal her golden prime.

And, no doubt, it will, to crown each aspiration,

Take Eternity to answer all the questionings of Time.

Every action with a motive hath its promise

Of eternal bane or blessing as its ultimate reward.

Let us (fearing, lest our good be taken from us)

See that every thought and purpose clearly glorifies the Lord.

To God's Acre, where nor fear nor care molesteth,

We resign the pulseless mortal, of life's sentient forces shorn.

He was true and so we leave him where he resteth,

Whence the Christ—"The Truth"—will call him on the Resurrection Morn.

THE C. A. S. E.

TORONTO, Aug. 10, 1891

Editor ELECTRICAL NEWS.

SIR,—When looking over the correspondence in the last issue of the NEWS, I noticed in a letter signed "R" a question is put to me as President of the C.A.S.E., as to whether any engineer was ever refused admission to the Association for lack of the necessary qualifications, or, as "R" puts it, because he did not know enough.

In answer, allow me to inform "R" that several engineers have been refused admission for lack of the necessary qualifications as engineers, therefore he is not stating facts when he asserts that all who have applied have been admitted. I would also remind "R" that the Association is no exclusive ring. Any engineer who is sober, steady and of good moral character, and who can satisfy the examining committee that he has the practical experience which the by-laws provide for, can become a member; and after going this far, if he regularly attends the

meetings and has any ambition at all, he will certainly find that he has considerably improved himself as an engineer, and will ultimately find himself in a better position. There are many engineers in the city of Toronto to-day who from personal experience can bear me out in the above statement. The writer himself speaks from experience on this point.

The chief object of the Association is to unite engineers in a body for mutual improvement and instruction, and to help each other along in our journey through life. We know there are many engineers who have not as yet identified themselves with the Association, and who would, both as engineers and citizens, be a credit to any organization. For these gentlemen we have nothing but the best feeling, and extend to them at all times a cordial invitation to "come with us."

I think it most unfair for "R" or any other person to use such language as he employs towards a body of men who, to say the least, are his equals both as men and citizens, just because one of their number, according to his idea, rushes into print with something which the facts of the case do not warrant.

I presume every institution for a good cause has had and always will have some enemies; therefore we should not expect to be an exception to the rule, but the C.A.S.E. has come to stay, and will get there, too, as long as its motto is "Excelsior."

I remain, yours &c.,

ALBERT E. EDKINS,
President No. 1, C.A.S.E.

22 Agnes St.



THE LATE JOHN C. FERGUSON.