



ENG. VICE-ADMIRAL SIR A. J. DURSTON, K.C.B.

(Past President.)

The death of Sir Albert John Durston, K.C.B., R.N., on April 18th at his house, St. Andrew's, Blackheath, evoked expressions of regret from a large number of old friends and associates by whom his grace of manner and his friendship were highly appreciated; the intimation of his death recalled many pleasant reminiscences associated with his life. Born at Devonport in 1846, he received the rudiments of his education under tutors. Prior to entering upon his engineering apprenticeship at Portsmouth Dockyard, he was a pupil of Mr. Robt. Barnes, Isle of Wight, where his attention to study, coupled with the ability of his teacher, enabled him to obtain an engineer-studentship and his entrance to the dockyard, where he served for over five years, gaining experience in the various departments of the work. While serving in the dockyard he continued his studies and passed successfully the examination for a studentship in the Royal School of Naval Architecture, South Kensington. His first venture at sea was in 1868, when he was appointed to H.M.S. *Ocean*, on the China station. His next appointment was on the engineering staff at Portsmouth, and he was promoted to Chief engineer in 1877, being transferred a few years later to Sheerness as head of the engineering department. His next step in promotion was to the position of

manager of the engineering department, Portsmouth Dockyard, his rank in the Navy list being gradually advanced to Fleet-Engineer and Inspector of Machinery. His appointment to the Admiralty staff was followed, on the resignation of Mr. Richard Sennet to take up other work, by his promotion to Engineer-in-Chief of the Fleet. Among the changes and improvements made in the engine power developments in the ships of the Navy during the course of Sir John Durston's administration were notably the water tube boiler, beginning with the French adaptation, the Belleville, which excited a considerable amount of discussion and criticism in engineering circles, about twenty-four years ago. This became so keen that it was termed the "battle of the boilers" for supremacy. The adoption of the water tube boiler generally was justified by trial, the first vessels so fitted being the *Powerful* and the *Terrible*. The change from reciprocating to turbine engines followed about six years later than the introduction of the water tube boiler, when Parsons' turbines were installed in the destroyer *Eden*. This test was such that subsequent cruisers and battleships were fitted. Sir John took a great interest in Technical institutions and their proceedings, he was a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Institution of Naval Architects, the Institute of Marine Engineers, and the Junior Institution of Engineers, of which he was a past-president. He was also president of the Institute of Marine Engineers in 1895-6. In his Presidential address to the marine engineers, the following headings indicate the scope of the address and incidentally show the nature of the details dealt with:—The work and objects of the Institute, high pressures and water tube boilers, leaky tubes in boilers, distribution of temperatures, high temperature causing leakage, bursting of sound tubes (copper and steel), proportions of boiler power, induced *v.* forced draught, trials with Belleville boilers, and Royal Naval Reserve Engineers—a subject in which he was greatly interested. It is interesting to note that on this occasion the vote of thanks was proposed to the President for his address by the late G. W. Manuel and seconded by the late W. H. Northcott. In December, 1898, Sir John Durston contributed to a discussion on the training of the marine engineer, held at the old premises of the Institute at Stratford. Our sympathy is extended to the family of him whom we honoured and esteemed, and whose memory we cherish.



