

A LOSS TO THE STATE.

DEATH OF SIR JOHN
DUNCAN.STATESMAN AND
GENTLEMAN.

UNIVERSAL SORROW.

The Hon. Sir John Duncan, M.L.C., died on Wednesday morning after a brief illness, and the news of his death came as a shock, because the latest bulletin issued on Tuesday concerning his condition promised an early restoration to health. Last week he was unable to take his seat in the Legislative Council on the opening day, but later in the week he attended and informed Ministers that he felt much better. Gallstones were the cause of his illness, and on Sunday afternoon the trouble became so acute that Dr. Giles, who was called in, arranged that the patient should be conveyed to the North Adelaide private hospital, as an operation seemed imperative. On Monday morning an operation was performed by Drs. Giles,



The late Sir John Duncan.

Cudmore, and Smeaton, and Sir John made such good progress that there was justification for the hope of speedy and complete recovery. Early on Wednesday morning, however, he suddenly became worse, and the members of his family were summoned to the sick room. The patient gradually grew weaker, and in spite of the close attention devoted to him he died at about half-past 9 o'clock.

The news was telephoned to friends and others, and it spread with remarkable rapidity. The toiling of the Town Hall bell and the hoisting of flags at half-mast at once told a tale of sadness, and the regret felt was universal, for Sir John Duncan was one of the best-known and most highly-respected men in South Australia. He was, indeed, one of Nature's gentlemen, one whose happy temperament endeared him to all, whose kindly disposition had a magnetic influence upon those who were brought into contact with him, whose manifest fairness and openness won for him admirers in all ranks, and whose merry laughter made those around him feel bright and happy. His thoughtfulness for others and gentle kindness won him universal love and esteem.

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A LIFE OF WORK.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Sir John Duncan's career was perfectly rounded. He won success in every sphere of activity upon which he entered. Of him it may truly be said "Take him for all in all, we ne'er shall look upon his like again." His services on behalf of South Australia began when he was quite a boy. It is over half a century since he rode from Wallaroo to Watervale with the news of the discovery of the Wallaroo mines, and it was he also who took the first miners from Burra to open up the rich copper lodes at Wallaroo and Moonta. Recently, when on a visit to the Wallaroo smelting works, Sir John Duncan pointed out a portion of the house still standing which formed portion of his father's station, whence he made his memorable ride. He also explained with regard to the origin of "Wallaroo" that he well remembered the wool sacks sent from the sheep station bore the name "Walla Aroo," which was the original spelling of the name. Although he was born of wealthy parents, Sir John Duncan had been a worker all his life. His first employment was in connection with the Wallaroo mines, and he won there the esteem and respect not only of his employers, but also of the men. Strange as it may sound, he was practically the first member of Parliament sent in by a Labor organisation. Wallaroo in the far away days when he originally entered the House of Assembly was included in the constituency of Port Adelaide, and Sir John was triumphantly returned by the miners against a candidate nominated at the city end. Since that period, now about 42 years ago, Sir John Duncan had been constantly and prominently in the public eye. Although he consistently declined to accept office in any Government, from the very first he was recognised as a man of special ability, with a natural bent for public affairs. In the House of Assembly he always occupied an honored position, and everyone knows what a tower of strength he was in the Legislative Council. Sir John Duncan had strong political views, but he was always thoroughly fair and upright, and it was because of this and the knowledge that he could be implicitly trusted that he won the respect of all classes of the community. There was as hearty and genuine a ring in the tribute paid to his memory by the leader of the Labor Party in the House of Assembly on Wednesday morning as there was in that uttered by the Premier.

No one who was present will forget the hearty manner in which Sir John Duncan was greeted when he rose to speak in the first joint sitting of the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly which was summoned some years ago with the object of electing a Senator to the Federal Upper House. The high esteem in which he was held in political circles was repeated throughout the many activities with which he was associated. Of him it can be said, as it was concerning the great Duke of Wellington, "Whatever record leaps to light, he never shall be shamed." Sir John Duncan's nature was of the sweetest and kindest, and one could easily understand the statement made by Mr. Vaughan in the House of Assembly that those who were brought into close acquaintance with him not only esteemed him, but loved him.

No section of the community more sincerely regretted to hear of the untimely death of Sir John Duncan than the members of the Parliamentary Labor Party, who regarded him as one of the fairest opponents any party could have. There was more than a feeling of ordinary respect for him; it was a feeling akin to love due entirely to the disposition of the man, his invariable courtesy, his pleasant manner, and his straightforwardness. Sir John Duncan was one of the few men who enjoyed the unqualified esteem of both friends and opponents in the political arena, and it will be difficult to fill the vacancy caused by his death.

A Man of Principle.

Although a man whose financial interests were closely interwoven with many of the industries of the State, Sir John never allowed personal considerations to interfere with his public life, and everywhere it was recognised that his one desire was to advance the prosperity of the State in which he had lived so long. The chorus of approbation that greeted the announcement last year that he had been honored by his Majesty the King with a knighthood in connection with the Birthday festivities was in itself an eloquent tribute to the very general admiration of his fellow-colonists.

The news of his death will come as a great shock to everybody, more particularly as the only announcement made concerning his sudden and brief illness was of a reassuring character. Sir John Duncan, as his friends knew him, was the picture of health and vitality, and although he had almost reached his 70th year he was active, and it appeared as if a long life still lay before him.

A Legislative Student.

When he took in hand any subject with the object of submitting a proposal to Parliament, or for the purpose of supporting or opposing a scheme set in motion by the Government or a private member, he set himself the task of probing the matter to the bottom and fortifying himself with facts which appeared to him to be indisputable before he rose in his place in Par-

liament to speak. Of him it may be said in Milton's words—

"Studious to learn and know, and thence to do

What might be public good."

The long-standing Murray River question was one of the problems that exercised his mind during many sessions, and some years ago, with the idea of becoming more fully acquainted with the subject, he decided to make a personal inspection of the stream and some of its tributaries. Consequently he formed one of a Parliamentary party organised for the purpose of making a trip down the watercourse from Echuca to the sea. On that occasion Sir John not only travelled the course mentioned, but he followed some of the Murray tributaries a long distance, the rivers traversed being the Wakool, the Murrumbidgee, and the Darling. The trip was made almost continuously in the daylight, so that the legislators could see the country and devote consideration to the Murray waters question in all its bearings. Sir John was one of the most observant of the party, and he gathered much valuable information on the journey that was of great help to legislators generally. His speeches on the question were always listened to with attention, and when presenting his case he invariably submitted facts and figures which could not fail to be of value to advocates of the rights of South Australia. One of his chief characteristics was his thoroughness in everything.

Early Life.

Sir John Duncan's birthplace was Anstruther, Fifeshire, Scotland. With his parents he came to South Australia in 1854, when he was nine years of age. He was the eldest son of the late Captain Duncan, who became associated with his brother-in-law, Sir Walter W. Hughes, in pastoral pursuits in country in the locality of Hoyle's Plains, and on Yorke Peninsula, including the area now constituting the famous copper producing districts of Wallaroo and Moonta. It was during their occupation of this country that the copper mines were discovered. The memory of the late Sir Walter Hughes, one of the original patrons of the University of Adelaide, is perpetuated by the handsome bronze statue in front of the institution, presented by his nephews, Sir John Duncan and the late Mr. Walter Hughes Duncan, M.P.

Sir John was educated privately as a child, and subsequently at St. Peter's College, at Bentley (near Gawler), and at the Watervale Grammar School. When copper was discovered in the Wallaroo district he was the bearer of the news to Sir Walter Hughes, who resided at "The Peak," near Watervale. He also drove the first four miners from Burra, where they had been engaged to the site of the Wallaroo discovery. When the Moonta mine was