

ments and to wave an emphasising forefinger at the Speaker or at the member addressed by way of driving home his points. In the history of South Australia successful lawyers have often developed into successful politicians, and Sir John Downer was one of many of his profession who took a foremost place both at the bar and in the counsels of his country. His legal knowledge was always cheerfully and unreservedly offered for the service of the House when difficulties arose concerning the drafting or the interpretation of a Bill or a clause, and in the Assembly, as in the Council, his advice on such matters was accepted with the utmost confidence even by his political antagonists. He had no personal enemies, for although Sir John said severe things in debate, he had a very kind heart, and was never quite so angry as he appeared to be.

A Believer in Australia.

Sir John Downer did great and valuable work in State politics, and he was twice Premier. It was his good fortune in 1887 to represent South Australia in London on the occasion of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, on which occasion he carried out his duties with dignity and a true sense of the greatness of the occasion. In the sphere of Federal politics, however, Sir John Downer perhaps performed the most signal service for the land of his birth. He always entertained broad views on public questions, and, as befitted a native of Australia, he had an abundant belief in the potentialities of the Commonwealth, its people, and its resources. He said, too, that if its high destinies were to be worthily achieved there must be a union of forces which would enable Australia to speak with one voice in the counsels of the world, instead of as a mere congeries of State. Although a true and loyal South Australian, Sir John Downer never feared that this State would suffer by a federation with the more populous and more prosperous eastern States. In his important work as one of the draftsmen of the Commonwealth Act and one of the leaders of the Convention, Sir John gave zealous and assiduous attention to the many difficult problems which came up for solution. While he was a champion of the small States, he was not a mere provincialist, and he took broad views concerning the powers which should be conferred upon the Federation as well as in relation to the franchise on which it should be elected. He had already earned the gratitude of the women of the community by carrying the Married Women's Property Act through our own Parliament, and he was an advocate of women's suffrage for the Commonwealth. He was an excellent constitutional lawyer, and he had powers of exposition which enabled him to explain knotty points. He was also learned in the history of Australia, and knew both its needs and potentialities, and he was diplomatic in the expression of his views. He possessed many of the best qualities of a statesman, and he devoted all these talents and equipments with enthusiasm to the task of making the Federal Constitution a model both of wisdom and draughtmanship. He was able to draw on his intimate acquaintance not only with the Constitutions of the United States and Canada, but those of ancient times. His single purpose was to give Australia the very best, and he earned the encomiums not only of his colleagues on the Drafting Committee, but of the whole Convention, by the cheerful diligence he brought to his task. He was the most approachable of men, and he was always willing to

listen to the opinions of others, even if he always followed his own ripened judgment. His native land had every reason to be proud of him, and Australia as a whole is under a debt of obligation to him.

A Family of Lawyers.

Sir John Downer was only about eight years younger than the State in which he was born and to which his honorable and successful career belonged. As a young man he was brought into contact with the men who had founded and built up the institutions of which in later years he was himself buttress and supporter. In manhood he was associated as a fellow-worker with those great men who established the Commonwealth, and he helped to draft the Constitution which has been the admiration of the world. Sir John belonged to a family which has done much to make history in this State. Four of them were lawyers and two were legislators. The fifth brother was Mr. Charles Downer, of Port Adelaide. Mr. A. G. Downer, the sole survivor, is linked with the pioneers of the State by the fact that he served his



THE LATE SIR JOHN DOWNER.

articles with the firm of Bartley, Bakewell, and Stow, who were well known when South Australia was a very young community. He never had any political ambitions, but he has held a most important position as a financial magnate, and he has in addition to his legal business done valuable work on the directorate of some of the chief institutions in the city. Mr. H. E. Downer, who was for many years Commissioner of Insolvency, gave up that position to enter Parliament, and he held the office of Attorney-General in the Cockburn Government. He was associated in business with Mr. Harold Downer, whose ability as a speaker and profound knowledge of the law gave promise of a highly successful career, but he died nearly 38 years ago. The legal firm of which Mr. A. G. Downer and Sir John Downer were partners dates back to 1868, and it has always stood high in the estimation of the public by reason at once of the legal knowledge of its principals and of their unblemished personal character. In later times the firm has included Mr. Frank Downer, son of Mr. Henry Downer, and Mr. Fred. Downer, son of Sir John Downer. Had Sir John not devoted so much of his time and thought to the monetarily unprofitable realm of politics he would have taken an even more prominent position at the bar than he enjoyed for so many years, and he would undoubtedly have filled a judgeship had he been so minded. Indeed, he might have gone on the Supreme Court bench as it was, but he preferred at the time to continue in a Parliamentary career.

A Native of Adelaide.

Born in Adelaide on July 5, 1844, Sir John Downer throughout his life retained the love of this city and of this State which is the privilege of all true patriots. He was a loyal Australian, and he had an abounding British patriotism, but the dearest place in his heart was kept for his own land and for the "Queen City of the South." He was always ready to champion its interests, either privately or in his many public capacities, and his skill as a dialectician, combined with his wide

stores of information made his help invaluable both at the Federal Convention and in the Senate, as well as in the motherland, and at the conferences he attended with inter-State representatives. He had a very cogent way of setting forth his arguments, combined with scintillations of good-humored wit, which were of material assistance to him, not only at the bar and in the Legislature, but on all other occasions. He was a skilled raconteur, and in private life was always a charming companion. He was faithful to friendships to a degree not always attained by public men. There was not a trace of meanness in his disposition, and no one could say that Sir Joan Downer ever went back on a promise, or proved unfaithful to a trust. In this respect politics did not spoil him, and legal subtleties had no effect upon him.

Another thing of which Sir John Downer was very proud was his old school. He was one of the early scholars of St. Peter's College, which is three years younger than was Sir John. His studies were afterwards continued with a legal firm, for there was no University in Adelaide in those days, and at the age of 24 years he was admitted to the bar, and shortly afterwards the well-known firm of G. & J. Downer came into existence. The legal profession in those far-away days included many men of great talents, and the South Australian bar had a reputation equal to that of any other similar fraternity in the Empire. Sir John and his brother, however, were able to hold their own against their compeers, and from the beginning they won success by their conscientious and thorough methods of carrying out their duties to clients and the public.

HIS LOVE FOR POLITICS.

Sir John had always a yearning towards politics, but he saw the wisdom of securing a good footing at the bar before he aspired to enter the Parliamentary arena. His industry and his devotion to his profession, however, had brought him such success that at the age of 34 he felt himself justified in contesting the district of