

OBITUARY

DR. J. G. BARTHOLOMEW

By the death – at Cintra, Portugal, on April 1 last – of J. G. Bartholomew, LL.D., the Society has lost a most devoted friend and supporter, and British cartography one of its most skilled and conscientious exponents.

John G. Bartholomew was born in Edinburgh in 1860, and was the elder son of another John Bartholomew, the founder of the great firm of map-makers, and himself the son of a cartographer. Before he was seventeen he entered the draughtsman's office in his father's establishment, and almost at once began to work at that method of replacing hill-shading by contours combined with layer colouring with which his name is so closely associated. A series of experimental maps were produced in the office in the late seventies, and were submitted to the firm which then published Messrs. Bartholomew's maps. They were rejected as unfamiliar, unintelligible, and unlikely to command any sale. Mr. John G. Bartholomew was, however, convinced that the old method of representing relief was doomed, and it says much for his persistence that in the year 1880, in the first edition of Baddeley's *Guide to the Lake District*, the maps supplied by the firm showed layer colouring. It would seem that these were the first topographical maps with layer colouring to be published, although the system is said to have been expounded by Carl Ritter in Germany at an earlier date. The well-known layer-coloured Reduced Ordnance Survey Maps, published by the firm, began to appear in 1888, and rapidly attained the position which they have held ever since in public estimation. It is scarcely possible to overrate their importance both in teaching the ordinary man the elements of map-reading and in creating a demand for good maps.

From early youth Dr. Bartholomew's health was precarious, and when twenty-one he had an illness so serious that his life was despaired of. On his recovery he went to Australia in a sailing-ship, being absent for a whole year. This was the first of a long series of journeys made in search of health, which continued till the last one to Portugal from which he did not return. On such journeys he habitually took copious notes, but although the diaries of his Australian voyage were published by his father in an Edinburgh newspaper, his real medium was the map, not print, and he wrote relatively little for the press. His visit to South Africa in 1894-5 may

be especially mentioned, since it brought him into contact with men of such different types as Cecil Rhodes and President Kruger.

His precarious health throughout his life makes his output of work all the more remarkable. It is not possible here even to summarise his achievements in the realm of cartography, and his great atlases must be familiar to the majority of our readers. It may, however, be well to emphasise that he combined a very delicate feeling for colour with extreme conscientiousness and an almost unlimited capacity for hard work. If it is with developments of layer colouring that his name is most closely associated, it should not be forgotten that he bestowed endless pains on the task of using colour for other purposes. The beautiful map showing the growth of Edinburgh, which he presented to the Edinburgh issue of this *Magazine*, and at which he worked for a long period, is a good illustration of this. It was indeed his great aim to use colour gradations in such a way as to bring out at a glance the different kinds of facts capable of being represented on a map, and his keen interest in science and human knowledge generally brought him into contact with many different kinds of workers with whom he collaborated. In that he was successful in representing the facts which they had obtained in an immediately intelligible form, it may well be claimed that he directly advanced science. In this connection attention may be directed especially to the work which he did in collaboration with Sir John Murray in the maps of the Challenger Reports, and with Dr. Buchan in the great Meteorological Atlas.

This form of collaboration was rendered all the easier in that he may be said to have 'had a genius for friendship. Cut off by reason of bad health, more especially in later years, from much of what is generally called social intercourse, he was all the more closely attached to those who shared his scientific interests. His friends were to be found in all parts of the globe, and his great admiration for the work of some of the German and French cartographers made him a member of that international brotherhood of science which, till the war came to break old bonds, seemed to many to offer such high hopes for the future.

His work for the Society is summarised in the Minute of Council which we print on p. 182 of this issue [*see footnote*]. His scientific work was recognised by his own University of Edinburgh, which bestowed upon him the degree of LL.D. in 1909, and by the Royal Geographical Society of London in the bestowal of the Victoria Medal in 1905. He was also an Hon. Member of a number of foreign geographical societies.

He married in 1889, and had a singularly happy family life. Of his three sons the second, a youth of much promise, was killed on the French fronts while the eldest, Captain Ian Bartholomew, after a distinguished career in the army, returned home and was admitted to partnership in the firm before his father's death. During Dr.

Bartholomew's absence in Portugal, also, Captain Bartholomew began to take up the work which his father had been compelled to drop, for though the latter's death was sudden at the last, he himself realised that his working days were probably over. That he should himself have clearly appreciated the fact that a great tradition is of more value than an individual life is characteristic of the man, for he worked for the sake of the work, and merged his own personality in that of his firm to an extent that few realised. His appreciation of the fact that effective map production involves the willing co-operation of many individuals led him, the year before his death, to inaugurate among the firm's employees a profit-sharing scheme by means of co-partnership certificates, which formed a practical acknowledgment of the part played by each in attaining the final result.

Footnote – see page below

{Excerpt from}

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

At a meeting of Council held on the 29th April, it was unanimously decided that the following minutes expressing the Council's sense of the loss that the Society had sustained through the deaths of Dr. Bartholomew and Lord Guthrie should be recorded; and that copies should be sent to Mrs. Bartholomew and Lady Guthrie respectively. The minutes are as follows :— "The loss which this Society has suffered since the last meeting of Council through the death of Dr. Bartholomew is one that demands special commemoration.

"About thirty-six years have passed since he, as an enthusiastic geographer of twenty-four, suggested the founding of such a Society. So energetically did he urge the project that, in spite of unexpected opposition and discouraging circumstances, he, with the aid of the zealous band of helpers whom he gathered round him, succeeded within a few months in securing its inauguration. From that time forth his devotion to the Society never flagged. As one of the Honorary Secretaries of the Society, from its foundation till his death, he was assiduous in his attendance at meetings of Council and Committees so long as his health permitted. His forethought, his guiding hand in conducting the affairs of the Society, his unflinching courage during periods of depression, and his generosity were conspicuous at the Council table. The success of the Society, was one of the great ideals of his life. Indeed the Council feel that the high reputation which the Society has gained in all parts of the civilised world is very largely due to his unwearied efforts and to his acknowledged eminence as a cartographer.

"The Council recognise that his death causes a blank which no one can adequately fill, and they unite in expressing deepest sympathy with Mrs. Bartholomew and family in their great bereavement."

BEQUEST FROM THE LATE DR. J. G. BARTHOLOMEW

A letter was read from Captain Ian Bartholomew intimating that under the will of the late Dr. Bartholomew the sum of £500 was bequeathed to the Society. The Secretary was instructed to write to Bartholomew a letter expressing the appreciation of the Council of this generous token of the late Dr. Bartholomew's interest in the Society.

HON. SECRETARYSHIP

It was unanimously agreed to recommend the election of Captain Ian Bartholomew, MA., M.C., as Honorary Secretary to the Society in succession to his late father.