

Obituary

SIR ROBERT BLAIR

WE deeply regret to record the death, which occurred on June 10, of Sir Robert Blair, Education Officer of the London County Council from 1902 until 1924. Born at Wigtown in 1859, he became a pupil teacher at the Garlieston Public School and later went to the University of Edinburgh, where he took his degree in 1880. He joined Aske's Hatcham school in 1882 and, while teaching, secured the London B.Sc. degree. There followed appointments as head of the Cheltenham School of Science and Technical Institute, Inspector of Science and Art, and Assistant Secretary for Technical Education (in Ireland). In 1904 he was appointed to the London County Council. Among the honours which came to him, in addition to his knighthood, were the Order of the Crown from the King of the Belgians, the LL.D. from his old University, an honorary fellowship of the Royal Society of Arts, and a fellowship of King's College, London. He was president of the Association of Directors and Secretaries for Education in 1914, and president of the Educational Science Section of the British Association in 1920.

It was in London that Sir Robert Blair performed the great tasks which made him famous as an educational administrator. Under his direction the present education system was shaped. In particular, the new organisation called for by the Education Act of 1918 gave him a great opportunity of demonstrating his powers of organisation.

Sir Robert's special interest in technical education was well known, and it was continued and deepened after his retirement. Appointed as the British Association's representative on the Emmott Committee of Enquiry into the Relationship of Technical Education to Industry, he became a member of the executive committee responsible for preparing the report and, following the death of Lord Emmott, carried out the duties of chairman.

Sir Robert's vision of the future was broad, and it was ever present in his work. "Life," he said, "has been extended. The engineer, the chemist and the medical officer have broadened the basis, protected our food supply, and safeguarded the public health. . . . Science has given us a new era." That was his attitude, and it goes far to explain his success as an administrator.

PROF. W. E. SOOTHILL

THE death of the Rev. W. E. Soothill, professor of Chinese in the University of Oxford, which took place on May 13 at Oxford at the age of seventy-four years, will be widely regretted.

William Edward Soothill was born at Halifax, and after a short term in a solicitor's office became a missionary. He went out to the Wenchow district of China in 1882, and within a short period had acquired a knowledge of Chinese which won the respect of Chinese savants. He became exceedingly

active in the promotion of teaching and training institutions and of preaching stations. He also translated the New Testament into Wenchowese, and made a translation into English of the Analects of Confucius. The scene of these early labours is commemorated in "A Mission in China". This narrative, however, did not appear until 1907, the year in which the scope of his educational activities was much enlarged by his appointment as president of the Imperial University of Shansi, newly founded by Timothy Richard. His success there encouraged him in the endeavour to promote a university for the whole of China; but his plans, when in course of active preparation by a committee at Hankow of which he was chairman, were interrupted by the revolution and the outbreak of war.

Soothill's services to China in England and France during the War were recognised by the award of two Chinese decorations. In 1920 he was appointed to the chair of Chinese at Oxford. By this time it was recognised that he was the foremost Sinologist of the day. He became a member of the governing body of the School of Oriental Studies in London, and in 1926 was a member of the delegation to China in reference to the settlement of the Boxer indemnities.

Prof. Soothill was the author of a number of scholarly works on China and Chinese, including "The Student's Chinese Dictionary", "The Three Religions of China", "China and the West", "A Short History of China" and "The Lotus of the Wonderful Law". His daughter is the widow of Sir Alexander Hosie, and is also known as a writer of authority on aspects of Chinese life and culture.

MR. D. N. DUNLOP, O.B.E.

MR. D. N. DUNLOP died on May 30 after a short illness. He was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1868, and served his engineering apprenticeship in Glasgow. After experience with the Westinghouse Company, he became in 1911 the first organising secretary of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association (B.E.A.M.A.) and in 1917 his post was renamed Director. He held this position until his death. He took an active part in the foundation of the Electrical Research Association and of the Electrical Development Association.

While Dunlop rendered great and enduring services to the British electrical industry, it is chiefly as the founder of the World Power Conference that he will be remembered in wider circles. Not many years after the War, he conceived the idea that engineers and men of science, whose inventions had been so powerful in destruction, should lend their great talents in the rebuilding of the world. He succeeded in enlisting the support of the Council of the B.E.A.M.A., which ensured the necessary financial backing, and on June 30, 1924, the Prince of Wales opened the first World Power Conference.