

William Arthur Williams, F.I.C.

AFTER a short illness, Mr W. A. Williams, Works Manager of the North British Rubber Co., Ltd., Castle Mills, Edinburgh, passed away on December 29, 1932. He had not enjoyed robust health for a few years, but a three months' tour in South Africa in 1928 did much to restore his former vitality, and he continued to interest himself in the scientific as well as the managerial side of his life's work until within a short time of his sudden death. By his death the rubber industry has been deprived of one of its pioneers in the application of scientific methods and principles to the introduction and control of manufacturing operations.

Born in 1879, he received his school education in Finsbury, whence he passed to the City and Guilds Technical College to study chemistry under the late Professor Raphael Meldola, F.R.S., and Mr Streatfeild. The sound technical training he there acquired remained one of Mr Williams's main assets throughout his business career, and his outlook on industrial problems was inspired by his early technical training. He was awarded the Senior Scholarship as the best final student of his year on the completion of his course in 1898, and he became research assistant to Professor Meldola, with whom he collaborated in a paper on polyazo compounds read before the Chemical Society in 1899.

Mr Williams was the first chemist appointed to the staff of Castle Mills, taking up duties there in May 1900. He was soon able to show the value of the application of his scientific training in the elucidation of works problems, and in experimenting with and standardising new tests for control of factory operations. Improvements were made in the laboratory accommodation and equipment, and a staff of qualified assistants was appointed.

His organising ability found further scope when he was appointed Assistant General Works Superintendent, and shortly afterwards Works Manager, a position which he held till his death.

During the period of his association with the rubber industry (which previously had been largely guided by "rule of thumb" methods) important progress was made towards the standardising and scientific control of factory processes, and, in collaboration with the rubber producers, the manufacturers succeeded in overcoming the many problems attendant on the introduction and development of plantation rubber.

Mr Williams contributed several papers on the subject of variability of plantation rubbers during this period of transition from wild rubbers to plantation rubbers.

He was highly esteemed by all those who came under his charge, and was keenly interested in improving the working conditions throughout the factory.

He was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Chemistry in 1918 and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1924. In 1925 he was elected Chairman of the Edinburgh section of the Society of Chemical Industry. He was a Member of Council of the Institution of the Rubber Industry and a member of its Board of Examiners, and took an active part in the work of its Scottish section. He also held the post of President of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts and received the Gold Medal of that Society on relinquishing this post in 1929.

C. L. A.