

Magnus Maclean, M.A., D.Sc., LL.D., M.Inst.C.E., M.I.E.E.

PROFESSOR MAGNUS MACLEAN was born in 1858. He died on September 2, 1937, having lived in Glasgow since his retirement in 1923. To do justice to his memory, a biographer should understand the highlander as well as the scientist. Possibly only a fellow-clansman could properly appreciate how this son of a Skye crofter reached an unrivalled position in the esteem and affection of his fellow-countrymen. This position Maclean won both by his sterling worth and by the active contribution he made to his native Gaelic, for he was not only a Lecturer in Celtic Literature and Language at Glasgow University, but also an author of these subjects—facts which were recalled when his Alma Mater conferred on him the LL.D. degree in 1919. On his side, too, Maclean loved the prominent place he had won, whether among highlanders, freemasons, electrical engineers or academic colleagues. Adulation did not destroy Maclean's strong character. He seemed to expect it and to enjoy it.

Passing to his professional side, "this gifted son of Skye," as he was more than once called, worked himself through the school-teacher stage to the University of Glasgow, like so many of his fellow-Scots, and it was not long before he attracted the notice of Kelvin (then Sir William Thomson), whose assistant he became until appointed to the Chair of Electrical Engineering at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, in 1899. Kelvin's attraction for him marks him out as a mathematical physicist, and this he was in a high degree. During his tenures as assistant, lecturer and professor he contributed many papers to the Royal Societies of London and of Edinburgh and to the Institution of Electrical Engineers; he published compendious works on modern electric practice and he produced text-books for his students. At Glasgow University, particularly, medical and engineering students who attended his lectures on physics spoke feelingly of his sympathy with their limitations. On the other hand, his professorial outlook was probably as autocratic as that of his master, and rather strange to engineers who had lived under the softening influence of works' life. In Maclean, academic tradition of departmental dignity and independence found a firm upholder. Personally Maclean was a kindly man, always willing to help. His humorous and his wise remarks remain long in the memory.

Maclean's best work at the Royal Technical College is seen in the

fine electrical engineering department he carved out in the new building in George Street. Three large laboratories, a large drawing-office, a large lecture theatre, lecture- and class-rooms, are almost unequalled in any other place.

As a practical engineer, the limitations imposed on Maclean by his surroundings should be mentioned. Glasgow is not a centre of electrical manufactures, and most of the local electrical engineers are agents, factors or salesmen. A less inspiring place for a professor needing the constant spur of creation and production it would be hard to imagine. These local conditions, however, did not make Dr Maclean less beloved by his electrical colleagues than by his fellow-clansmen.

For his scientific work Maclean held the D.Sc. degree of Glasgow University, and he was a member of many learned societies, among which may be mentioned the Royal Society of Edinburgh (elected 1888) and the Institutions of Civil and of Electrical Engineers.

Among his sorrows is to be mentioned the loss of his wife and of two sons. He is survived by his eldest son and two daughters. He was an elder in the Westbourne Gardens Church, Glasgow. Maclean loved open-air recreation—golf, bowls and angling may be particularly mentioned.

As a man Maclean was unique—we shall not see his like again.

S. P. S.