

Major-General Gosset. By John Winzer, F.R.S.E.

(Read June 19, 1899.)

The Royal Society of Edinburgh has lost a distinguished Fellow in the death of Major-General Gosset, R.E., F.R.S.E.; he died at 70 Edith Road, West Kensington, on the 19th May 1899, aged 77.

Major-General Gosset had a varied and distinguished career. At the Military Academy he was an able and industrious student, so got nominated to the Corps of Royal Engineers in 1840. In 1842 he was appointed to the Ordnance Survey, and on this great national work he performed many very responsible and important duties. He was employed as Trigonometrical and Astronomical Observer, and assisted, in 1844, at the great longitude operations at Valentia, in Ireland; and the Astronomer-Royal, Professor Airey, wrote of him: "Lieutenant Gosset is a most zealous and able officer, and how fortunate for the satisfactory termination of the work was the choice of the Valentia Observer." From observing duties Lieutenant Gosset was placed in command of a Detail Survey Division for the surveying of counties in Scotland, and made surveys of Wigtown and Kirkcudbright, and commenced the surveying of the City and County of Edinburgh, but before finishing the latter work he was appointed Executive Officer at the Ordnance Map Office, Southampton, a post he could not have filled without possessing varied qualifications and marked ability. It was whilst superintending the surveying of the City of Edinburgh, in 1850, that Captain Gosset was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In 1855 Captain Gosset was selected to fill the important post of Survey-General in the Island of Ceylon, a position in which he displayed great administrative ability, and rendered valuable services to the island. He found the Survey Department weak in numerical strength and inefficient, and in three years, under Sir Henry Ward's approval, he reorganised and added over twenty able assistants, most of whom were

from the Ordnance Survey, to his staff, and left the department sufficiently strong and efficient to meet the great and growing demands for Crown lands and surveys, and for increasing the revenue from sales of Crown lands from £6000 to £37,000, which went on increasing to £70,000 per annum, at the same time, relatively to the amount of work done, reducing the operative expenses by many thousands of pounds per annum. The Governor of Ceylon, Sir Henry Ward, himself a very able and indefatigable man, wrote in his message to the Legislative Council: "Captain Gosset was a man of great ability and untiring industry, and he was eminently practical."

Severe labour in a tropical climate compelled Captain Gosset, in 1858, to seek change of climate and rest in England, and his inability to resume his post in Ceylon led him to accept an appointment in British Columbia, where he filled the offices of Treasurer, Commissary, Postmaster-General, Master of the Mint, and Director of the Gold Assay Department, giving great satisfaction in all departments to the Home Authorities.

On promotion, Colonel Gosset returned to the duties of his corps, and was Commanding Royal Engineers in Ireland, Plymouth, and Woolwich, until he attained the rank of Major-General, and retired from the army at the end of 1873. At this time Major-General Gosset was too young for a totally inactive life being congenial to him, so he obtained an appointment as Inspector of Art Schools, under Science and Art Department, South Kensington Museum, and continued to fill this post until the age clause compelled him to retire at the end of 1894. As inspector, Major-General Gosset did more than satisfy the Science and Art Department.

Recapitulation of Major-General Gosset's official services during a period of fifty-four years, 1840 to 1894: rising in military rank from Lieutenant to Major-General; measuring the heavens and the earth on the great national work of the Ordnance Survey; filling the position of Surveyor-General in the Island of Ceylon; Treasurer, Commissary, Postmaster-General, Master of the Mint, and Director of the Gold Assay Department in British Columbia; Commanding Royal Engineers at the chief military stations in Great Britain; and Inspector of Art Schools under Science and Art Department, South Kensington Museum.