PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS.

1885.

To THE COUNCIL AND MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIAN ENGINEERS’ ASSOCIATION.

Gentlemen,—

Following the precedent established by your late President, Mr. Watson, of recording in an annual address the progress of the Association for future reference I will commence with a retrospect of the past, and review the action taken by the Members during the passing year.

Prior to the formation of this Association the civil, mechanical, electrical, mining, gas, and agricultural engineers had no opportunity of meeting as members of branches of a profession common to all. Interchange of views was, excepting between individuals, impossible, and each branch maintained a separate existence. The improvements made in each were not placed before the whole body, and the common interests could not be discussed and placed before the public.

Now, however, all can meet, and the progress made in so short a period by so new an Association is such as will show that it has supplied what was evidently a want on the part of the profession.

Amongst the members—who now number 124—we find that there was about forty civil engineers, including those engaged in hydraulic, gas, electric, and roadway engineering, about ten.
mining, half-a-dozen marine, and about sixty-eight mechanical engineers, including all branches, so that the Association is really representative of the whole profession.

The interest that has been shown by others not members of the Association in some of the papers read, together with the authority given by the Government to the Association to nominate one of the three Members of the Board of Examiners of Engine-drivers, added to the fact that both the other two Members also belong to the Association, sufficiently prove that it has secured the sympathy and interest of the public so far as could be expected during so short a period since its inception.

It cannot be expected that so recently formed an Association should be very largely known as yet, but as time passes on, and further papers are read, discussed, and circulated, interchanges will be made with kindred institutions, and the weight and influence of the Association will increase.

We now interchange with two other institutions, and on the issue of our first volume of Transactions, we shall be able to place ourselves in communication with others who will, I trust, reciprocate.

To support such an Association, however, it is necessary that Members should not only supply papers affording the results of their observation and experience, but discuss those of others in order that the best system of construction in future, and the avoiding of errors in the past should be arrived at. Without such discussion each if left to find out for himself, at, in many cases, great disadvantages and cost, facts and experiences which can be communicated by some one or other in a simple discussion upon the points raised in a paper read before the Association.

Seven papers have been read and printed, and are now presented in a concrete form in a first volume, some of which have evoked valuable discussion.

The number of Members that have joined during this year is twenty-two, showing a large and steady advancement, whilst
the financial position of the Association is satisfactory, notwithstanding the heavy drain upon its resources caused by the Exhibition held in 1884.

During this year the first dinner of the Association has been held, and was largely attended, and as it tends to cement more closely the Members of the different branches of engineering it is to be hoped that it will become annual, but in addition to this I trust that means will be devised to institute annual inspections by the Association of the notable engineering works during the year throughout the colony on the basis of the annual visitations of similar institutions in the older countries.

During the year the positions of the professional officers employed in the Government service have been classified by the Public Service Board, but in such manner as to confer, in the opinion of the Association, greater advantages upon the clerical than upon the professional division, and in the interests of the profession the Association has placed its views before the Board endorsing the action taken on the same subject by the Institute of Surveyors, which it is hoped will lead to a better recognition of the work done and previous training required of professional officers.

In conclusion, I tender my sincere thanks to the Members for the honor they conferred upon me by election to the office of President, and trust that on my retirement at the close of the year that confidence will not appear to them to have been misplaced. The thanks of the Association are due to the Vice-presidents and Members, and to the hon. Secretary, Mr. Sherrard, for the time and energy bestowed by them on the affairs of the Association, and especially due from me for the valuable assistance rendered to me during the year.

R. H. SHAKESPEAR,
President.