

Obituary Notices.

THE LATE ABIJAH MURRAY, I.S.O.,
SECRETARY OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND.

WE regret to intimate the death, on 19th February, of Mr. Abijah Murray, I.S.O., the Secretary of the Local Government Board. Mr. Murray's death is a national loss; to most of the readers of this magazine it is something more: it is the loss of a friend and counsellor.

Few men were better known in Scotland than Mr. Murray. In a sense this was due to the accident of his position, as he was one of the most retiring of men, and almost, it may be said, took pains to efface himself. But his rare knowledge of the Statutes affecting Local Government, his skill in advising, and his unique goodness of heart, formed a combination that made it impossible for local officials, when in difficulty, to do other than seek his advice.

Mr. Murray was born in Edinburgh in 1852, and educated at the High School and University. He intended to enter the Indian Civil Service, but, being offered a junior clerkship in the office of the Board of Supervision, he sacrificed his ambitions to the work of home administration. It was soon recognised that in Mr. Murray the department had secured a man of unusual capacity; but, although his great abilities were at once appreciated and made use of, no exceptional promotion ever came to him. He passed successively through the stages of third, second, and first-class clerk. In 1897, when at the head of his class, he was appointed chief clerk.

On Mr. Falconar Stewart's retirement in June, 1909, Mr. Murray became Secretary to the Board. Few appointments have given such general satisfaction.

After the retirement of Sir John Skelton in 1897 from the Vice-Presidency of the Local Government Board, it may be said that Mr. Murray was the guiding force of the department. His personality influenced all its actions. Mr. Murray seemed to represent the one permanent element at the Board. Others died, or became too old and retired: Mr. Murray remained the same. He became the senior official of the Board when a comparatively young man, and he had been so for the last twenty years. It is difficult to conceive of the Local Government

Board without him, and to-day by none is his loss more mourned than by the members of the Board.

Though he was familiar with every branch of local government, Mr. Murray's earliest years of public service were devoted to public health, and the great interest which he always maintained in that branch is apparent from his literary work. It is well known that the original Handbook of Public Health for Scotland, nominally the work of Sir John Skelton, was actually written by Mr. Murray. After the passing of the Public Health (Scotland) Act of 1897, in conjunction with Mr. Patten Macdougall, he issued a new Handbook of Public Health. This book enjoys a wide and merited popularity. Mr. Murray had edited since its inception the *Councillor's Manual*, a work covering the whole sphere of Scottish local administration.

Mr. Murray held for many years a captain's commission in the volunteers, and he took a keen interest in all that pertained to home defence.

He was proud of the fact that he was a citizen of Edinburgh, and it was one of the dearest concerns of his life to justify that citizenship. He felt that he owed much to Edinburgh, and he tried to pay something of the debt by increasing kindness to its less-favoured sons. He interested himself in every good work. His private life was a series of unobtrusive beneficences.

In the beginning of February he contracted a chill. After an illness lasting only three weeks, he passed painlessly away on the morning of 19th February.

We have been permitted by the Local Government Board to print the Minute in which, on receipt of the intimation of Mr. Murray's death, they record their appreciation of his services.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND,