

STEAM BOILER EXPLOSIONS

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Steam Boiler Explosions by Zerah Colburn & Robert H. Thurston

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ZERAH COLBURN & ROBERT H. THURSTON

STEAM BOILER EXPLOSIONS

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STEAM
BOILER EXPLOSIONS.

BY
ZERAH COLBURN.

Edited, with an Introduction, by
ROBERT H. THURSTON.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE following little treatise on the subject of Steam-boiler Explosions is a "classic" in its department of engineering literature. Its author, ZERAH COLBURN, was one of the most remarkable and most talented men that the constructive profession has ever known. Descended from a family noted for its intelligence, and especially for talent in mathematics and the sciences, he fully sustained its reputation. For many years connected with that famous periodical the "*London Engineer*," he finally severed his connection with it, to found another now no less famous journal, "*Engineering*." This he promptly made a success in all respects, and a success it remains to-day, in the hands of Messrs. Maw and Dredge, his hardly less talented and en-

terprising lieutenants. He broke down from over-work, after a time, and remained in a state of nerve-exhaustion for two years or more, able to do little or no work on his new journal, and sustained only by the life, energy, and ambition of his two aids, and his friend the publisher of the paper. He at last came to his early home, in America, and there died, leaving a record, short though it was, that most men might well envy.

His work and the monuments of industry and ability which he has left behind him have peculiar interest to Americans; not simply because of his own connection with us by birth and early training, but because he never forgot his interest in his own country or his own countrymen. At a time when it was felt, by many of his colleagues in the profession and compatriots from the United States, that it was difficult to secure fair recognition in England for good work done, or for the great inventions that were seeking continually to find introduction there, and when every one felt, visiting that

country, that the feeling toward the American Cousin was not always kindly, and that the latter sometimes had reason to feel that he was not always, not often, in fact, given a generous reception, on that side the Atlantic, by those who should be his best and warmest friends, his brothers of the blood, Zerah Colburn told the writer that he intended that, in the columns of the new paper, especial care should be taken to give to America and to Americans ample space and fair hearing ; that the cousins from the West should have kindly welcome on all occasions, and a thoroughly honest and generous treatment. National prejudice, mistaken patriotism, petty jealousy, should never shut out the brother-inventor, the fellow-mechanic, the colleague in engineering of this side the Atlantic, from the English heart or British shops, so long as his journal should endure. And he well redeemed his promise ; and well have his heirs and assigns redeemed it. That attitude on his part preceded a very complete change in that of the Brit-

ish press and the British people toward America and Americans, and toward the work of the American engineer and mechanic. The devices of the "Yankee" inventor are now nowhere more heartily and wholesomely received than by the better class of British technical journals. British practitioners have usually been fair and generous in their judgments of their cousins on this side the water.

Colburn, as a matter of course, in organizing and promoting a new scientific periodical, found himself compelled to do a very large part of the work of writing for the paper himself. But he secured, in this work, the aid and the countenance of many of the best engineers on both sides the ocean, and was especially fortunate in obtaining the assistance of his old friend Alexander Holley, than whom no one could have wielded a more facile and productive pen. The paper became promptly known in the United States as the friend of every American visiting London, and as the advocate of all worthy American enter-