

CHARLES HESTERMAN MERZ was born at Gateshead on the 5th October, 1874, and died as the result of enemy action on the 15th October, 1940. He was educated at Bootham, York, and at Armstrong College. Throughout his career he was intimately connected with the development of electric power-supply and electric traction, including Newcastle-on-Tyne (1900), involving the first use in England of three-phase distribution at the then high pressure of 6,000 volts, and the design and construction of the Neptune Bank power-station; the electrification of the Tyneside lines of the North Eastern Railway, and the design of the Carville power-station (1903); promotion of the London power bill, and electrification of collieries and iron and steelworks in the north of England (1905); electrification of suburban railways at Melbourne (1907), Buenos Aires (1909), and Bombay (1913), followed by extension of the electrification of the railway over the Ghats; the Carville "B" power-station and the North-Tees power-station (1914-1918); and many other power schemes in America and South Africa. During the Great War he was Director of Experiment and Research at the Admiralty, dealing especially with anti-submarine warfare. In 1919 he advised upon the design of the new large power-station at Barking. He was a member of Government committees dealing with electricity in mines, power-supply, fuel economy, etc., and in 1917 was chairman of the electric power-supply section of the Haldane Coal Conservation Committee. In 1925 he put before the Electricity Commissioners a report which led later to the Act of 1926, creating the Central Electricity Board, and to the construction of the "Grid." In 1932 he was awarded the honorary degree of D.Sc. by Durham University. In 1937 he was Chairman of an international Commission appointed by the Egyptian Government to inquire into the utilization of water-power from the Aswan dam.

Dr. Merz was elected a Member of The Institution on the 10th January, 1905. He was Vice-President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers from 1912 to 1915, and was awarded the Faraday medal in 1931. He was also a Fellow or member of numerous other technical societies, to which he presented Papers on power-supply and railway electrification. His brilliant brain conceived many ideas of a creative nature for the benefit of industry and mankind as a whole, and his services were given unstintingly without thought of self or of remuneration to all who called upon him—and especially to the Government and the national service. He was keenly interested in the younger generation, and was always ready to listen to their point of view, whilst his guidance and advice assisted many of them to make the right choice of a career.

In 1913 he married Stella Alice Pauline Byrne, daughter of Edmond de Satur, of Dublin, and had one son and one daughter, both of whom lost their lives with their father. His son, Robert, was engaged on work of national importance, in spite of his youth, and had already shown full promise of outstanding ability to follow in his father's footsteps.