

## DEATH OF MR. E. A. ROBERTS.

Whilst walking through the Queen's Hall from the House of Representatives on Tuesday, says the "Argus," where a few moments before he had been taking an active part in the proceedings, Mr. Ernest Alfred Roberts, the member for Adelaide, fell at the base of the statue of the late Queen Victoria, and was dead before a helping hand could reach him. The Estimates had been under discussion, and Mr. Roberts, feeling the heat, left the chamber, and was walking in the direction of the library, when, without a word, he fell. At that moment one of the Parliamentary attendants, Mr. G. Gaskel, was passing across the hall, and he rushed to the assistance of Mr. Roberts, lifting his head on to his knee. Almost at the same moment Mr. Archibald, the member for Hindmarsh, entered the hall through the door from the library, and he hastened to the side of his colleague. This was at 19 minutes past 5 o'clock.

Dr. Moloney was hurriedly summoned from the chamber, and he did all that was possible to restore animation, but he intimated that only the faintest hope could be held out, as the pulse had ceased, and the action of the heart was imperceptible.

Dr. W. E. O'Hara arrived, and having whispered a word that there was no sign of life, someone amongst the number covered the dead face with a handkerchief.

Mr. Ernest Alfred Roberts was born in London on February 21, 1868, and was therefore in his 46th year. He was educated in Guernsey. As a boy he ran away to sea, and for several years led an adventurous sailor's life, which, among other parts of the world, took him to the South Seas. In 1886 he settled in Port Pirie. For some years he worked on wharves there. The gift of public speaking gave him prominence among his fellows, and the wage-earners of Port Pirie gave him his opportunity in the Legislature by returning him as one of the members of the Assembly for Gladstone, in April, 1896. He was then 28 years old, and was for several years known as the baby of the House. The most striking incident associated with Mr. Roberts's career in the South Australian Legislature was the part he played in the downfall of the long-lived Kingston Ministry.

Mr. Roberts continued a member of the South Australian Assembly until April, 1902. Meanwhile the military spirit seized him, and he joined the South Australian forces for South Africa during the Boer War.

On the first occasion he held the rank of Lieutenant in the Fourth

South Australian Contingent, commanded by Colonel Rowell, C.B., and on a second occasion as adjutant in the Victorian contingent, led by Lieut.-Colonel McLeish, C.M.G., from whom he received a letter expressing high appreciation of his services.

Mr. Roberts remained out of politics until May, 1905, when he re-entered the Assembly for a term of three years as one of the representatives of Adelaide.

Mr. Roberts entered the House of Representatives as member for Adelaide in succession to the late Mr. C. C. Kingston, and was one of the younger members of the Labour party whose future was full of promise. With robust health, there was no position the party could have bestowed which would have been beyond his capacity to win. As it was, with his indifferent health, he had already won an honorary position in a Labour Administration, and was looked upon as being certain of Ministerial office should Labour again come into power.

Combined with devotion to duty was the Parliamentary instinct strongly developed. Attendance in the House and attention to proceedings were with him pleasant duties. While other members sought relaxation outside, he was content to sit in the chamber for hours, interested and vigilant. He was a master of the rules of the House, and of forms and procedure, had a faculty for argument, a good command of language, and in the heat of debate was a hard-bitter. His physical condition made it necessary for him to exercise restraint. He had been warned against the dangers of over-excitement, and even in the most strenuous moments of cross-chamber exchanges his

self-control was so excellent that, although his words were forceful and sharp, his feelings never seemed to be ruffled. His military training and experience made him of special value to the Fisher Ministry, for with the Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) in the Senate it was necessary that the department should be represented in the House of Representatives. The strenuous election campaign earlier in the year tended, if anything, to still further undermine Mr. Roberts's strength, but this did not deter him from taking an active part in the arduous session now drawing to a close. He was constant in his attendance, and his devotion to duty must have played a large part in hastening his tragic and untimely death.

Mr. Roberts enjoyed the confidence of his constituents in a large measure, the voting for Adelaide at the last election being:—

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E. A. Roberts . . . . .	15,139
J. A. Craig (Liberal) . . . . .	6,554
E. J. Craigie (Independent) . . . . .	980

Mr. Roberts left a widow at Prospect (a daughter of the late Mr. P. Collins, whom he married at Port Pirie) and four children, Mr. E. A. W. Roberts (journalist), Misses Wanda, Florence, and Beryl Roberts. The remains were taken to Adelaide for interment.

The death-roll of members of the Commonwealth Parliament since the inception of Federation has been a heavy one, in which South Australia largely figures. No fewer than five representatives of South Australian constituencies have died of recent years, three of the deaths having been tragic in their suddenness: Sir Frederick Holder, the Speaker in the House of Representatives, collapsed in the Chamber after an all-night debate, and died in the Speaker's room adjoining; Mr. E. L. Batchelor, then Minister for Home Affairs in the Fisher Ministry, died suddenly one Sunday while on a walking tour with the members of the Melbourne Wallaby Club; while the third in the list of the unexpected fatalities is Mr. Roberts. The other South Australians who died while members of the House of Representatives are Mr. C. C. Kingston and Mr. James Hutchison, while Sir Richard Baker, Senator Vardon, and Mr. V. L. Solomon died shortly after their membership ceased.