

OBITUARY

INGÉNIEUR HYDROGRAPHE GÉNÉRAL C.-D.-M. ROLLET DE L'ISLE (retired).

Charles-Dominique-Maurice ROLLET DE L'ISLE was born on November 19, 1859. He entered the "Ecole Polytechnique" in 1878 and left it in 1880 as a member of the Corps of Hydrographic Engineers. He took part in many hydrographic operations on the coasts of France and French Colonies. Amongst others, we may cite, in France : the coasts of Northern Brittany in 1883, Gironde 1892 ; then as a Mission leader : Survey and study of rivers in Brittany in 1896, coasts of Southern Brittany from 1904 to 1908.

After the death of Commandant RIVIÈRE, killed just outside Hanoi in 1883, ROLLET DE L'ISLE was sent to Indo-China under the hydrographic engineer J. RENAUD and remained there for two years (1883-1885). He showed great endurance and incessant activity which enabled him to supply Admiral COURBET, who was in command of the French forces, with very valuable material for the conduct of operations.

His services were very much appreciated by Admiral COURBET. He took part in the battles of the Min River and in the destruction of the squadron and Arsenal of Foochow, as well as in engagements at Kelong and Tamsui in the Formosa Island. He also made a large portion of the survey of the Fai-Tsi-Long Archipelago, at the back of the Gulf of Tongking, which includes thousands of islets, nests of numerous pirates who hindered trade in the whole district.

In 1894, ROLLET DE L'ISLE led a hydrographic party to the coasts of Madagascar where he made a complete survey of the Cape Amber peninsula and of the coasts stretching between Capes Tanjona and St. Andrew.

After the eruption of the Montagne Pelée, he became a member in 1902 of a scientific mission sent to the Martinique and was able to ascertain that the seism had not appreciably modified the depths of the seas surrounding the island.

In 1919, he became Director of the French Hydrographic Office and held that position until he retired in 1924.

With Ingénieur hydrographe général J. RENAUD, he took a very active

part in the first International Hydrographic Conference held in London in 1919, when the creation of the International Hydrographic Bureau was decided. In February 1924, he was among the candidates for the Directorship of the Bureau, in succession to the Norwegian Captain MÜLLER, resigned. Admiral NIBLACK of the U.S.A. Navy was elected, but ROLLET DE L'ISLE did not cease to take an interest in the Bureau to which he sent several very much appreciated articles. *The archives of the French Hydrographic Service* (Vol. I-2, p. 145); *Present methods of French Ingénieurs hydrographes* (Vol. III.2, p. 183); *Report on the use of aerial photography by the hydrographic service of the French Navy* (Vol. I-1, p. 73); *Historical Notes on the difference of longitude between Paris and Greenwich* (Vol. III-2, p. 177); *Remarks on the bust of Beautemps-Beaupré* (Vol. I-2, p. 160); *Use of the words "Hydrography" and "Hydrographer"* (Vol. I-2, p. 171).

ROLLET DE L'ISLE published in 1886 under the title of "*Au Tonkin et dans les Mers de Chine*" a graphic relation of his eventful stay in Indo-China and China and of the historical developments in which he was involved. These recollections which he related with much humour are also abundantly illustrated with very cleverly drawn pencil sketches in which he reproduced with great accuracy, the ships, crafts, sampans, costumes and uniforms of that period.

In collaboration with the ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées (Government Civil engineer) E. BLIM, he published in 1899 a "*Manuel de l'Explorateur*" which in a very clear and simple manner enables any explorer to become experienced in practical observations and return from voyages with material for true representation.

In the "*Annales Hydrographiques*" of 1892, he gave a description of an "*Abaque pour la détermination du point à la mer*" (Graph for fixing position at sea) compiled in collaboration with his colleague FAVÉ.

Engraved with great care, this diagram is one of the simplest to supply a graphic solution of a problem which has given rise to so much research work and which transoceanic air crossings have rendered very interesting at the present time.

An excellent geometric study by the same author in the "*Annales Hydrographiques*" of 1893, deals with the "*Construction du point par la Station — Solution de quelques cas particuliers*", in which he displays great ingeniousness in the use of elementary geometrical methods.

This ingeniousness was also brought into operation in the construction of a *reflecting circle* which makes it possible to take angles to 180° and upwards and is very helpful and very much employed to shape course along

arcs subtending large angles. A description of this apparatus is found in the "Annales Hydrographiques" of 1883, it was reproduced in Vol. X, N° 2 of the *Hydrographic Review*, page 147.

In the same "Annales", he published in 1917, one of the first studies on l' "Utilisation des photographies faites en avion".

ROLLET DE L'ISLE was for a few years Head of the French Tide Department. He took a special interest in this difficult and important question of tides. In a note published in the "Annales Hydrographiques" of 1896, he brought to light the methods of *harmonic analysis*, which were little employed in France at the time. In 1905, he published at the "Imprimerie Nationale" a volume entitled : " *Observation, étude et prédiction des marées* ", which is a regular vade-mecum for hydrographic engineers who find therein a statement of the operations and calculations to be constantly made in practice.

A very eminent engineer, quite conversant with all branches of hydrographic science, ROLLET DE L'ISLE was very modest, even-tempered and kind to his subordinates whose zeal he knew how to keep up and whose work he directed without ever drawing attention to his own merits.

He was made a "Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur".

He was Chairman of the French Section of Physical Oceanography in the International Research Union (Union Internationale des Recherches) from October 6, 1921 to December 23, 1929, when he sent in his resignation.

He was a member of the "Commission Consultative Internationale des Travaux du Canal de Suez" and of the "Commission technique des Ports marocains de Méhédia et de Rabat-Salé".

He died in Paris on November 24, 1943, without illness, of heart failure.

P. V.

