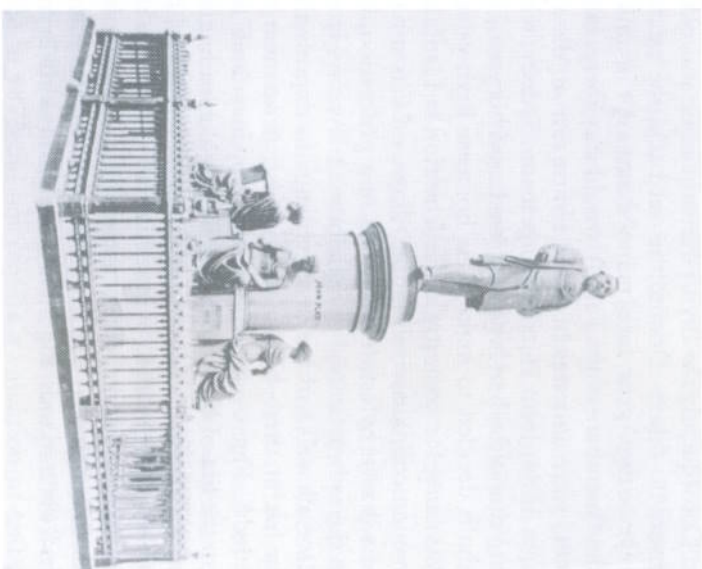


VII *Sudden Changes*

In the Spring of 1872 work commenced on considerable alterations and extensions to the House at Bryn-y-Neuadd. It was not possible, therefore, for John and Alice Platt to be in residence that season, instead, they, with one of their daughters and a niece, embarked on a tour of Italy, one purpose of which was to obtain new items of furnishings for Bryn-y-Neuadd. At Turin, John Platt contracted a chill, and although the party made every haste for home, the affliction developed into pneumonia so that, on reaching Paris, the party was forced to stay its journey in the Hotel Maurice in the Rue de Rivoli. There John Platt died on the 18 May, he was only 54.

The townspeople of Oldham received the news in the vein of a family bereavement. Obituaries were generous with their words in recalling to memory the widespread benefits John Platt had brought to the town through his company and by way of the energetic and unfailing public services he had rendered. Alice Platt was presented, on 29 May 1872, with an illuminated letter of condolence, arranged in book form, from the Mayor, Alderman and Burgesses of the Borough of Oldham. John Platt was buried, in a surprisingly modest tomb in Chadderton cemetery. The tomb bears the simple inscription: "Beneath this tomb lie buried the remains of John Platt, MP for Oldham, died Paris 18 May 1872, aged 54, Requiescat in Pace." Six years after his death a bronze statue, mounted on an imposing marble plinth, was erected in his memory, close to the front of Oldham Town Hall, which, in later years, a less remembering generation chose to relegate to Alexandra Park. Yet, many of the torches he lit for the benefit of Oldham, especially in the field of technical education, were to be kept aflame by others he had inspired and by the great Company he had owned. The death of John Platt posed no serious difficulties at the Company for Samuel Radcliffe Platt, who had been well and truly schooled by his father, instantly took the helm, though far earlier than he had expected to be called to do.

In Llanfairfechan, and in the wider county of Caernarfon, the shock and grief at John Platt's death was equally felt. Locally, it had been anticipated that after John Platt's death Henry Platt would transfer to



John Platt's Monument, Alexandra Park, Oldham.

Bryn-y-Neuadd, which estate it seemed John Platt had regarded as the family seat, and Alice Platt would retire to Gorddinog as the dower house. In reality, well before John Platt's death, matters had been decided otherwise. Alice Platt preferred to live in Oldham and it was understood, if widowed, she would make Werneth Park her home, which she did for a further thirty years. Henry Platt's prime interest was agriculture and he remained at Gorddinog, which had already been conveyed to him in his father's lifetime, since that estate had every advantage over Bryn-y-Neuadd for such an interest. Sam Platt (as he was known to the Family), with his commitments in Oldham, also dwelt at Werneth Park. The third son, Frederick Platt, shortly to marry, chose to settle at Barnby Manor in Nottinghamshire. Bryn-y-Neuadd was, therefore, left unoccupied and the other sons, as they came to need a residence, showed no enthusiasm for the place, preferring to find homes in Cheshire, Flintshire and Bedfordshire, some with secondary homes in London, at fashionable addresses. James Edward Platt, the sixth son, acquired a villa on the French Riviera – Villa Annunziata Californie, at Cannes, as a retreat in which to spend part