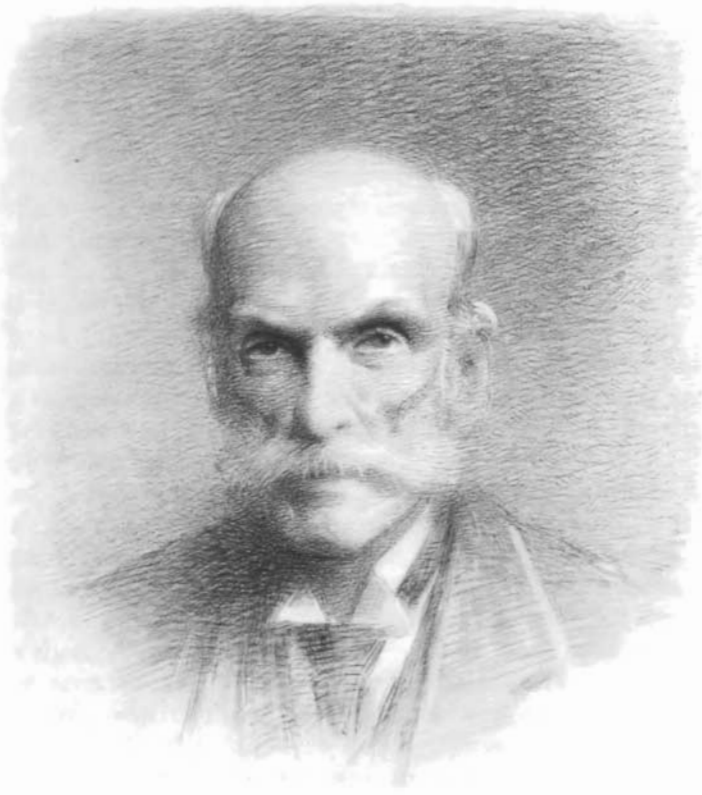

Obituary.

SIR HENRY HOYLE HOWORTH, K.C.I.E. D.C.L. F.R.S. F.S.A.

The death of Sir Henry Howorth on 16th July, 1923, deprived the Institute of a President who for many years had made its interests his own. Little more than a fortnight before he had kept his eighty-first birthday. He was born on 1st July, 1842, at Lisbon, where his father was a merchant. His family, however, came from Lancashire, and much of his own life, from his earliest days, was spent in a county which he always regarded with peculiar affection. His father's home was at Shawforth, near Bacup, and his mother, Elizabeth Beswicke, came from the neighbouring town of Rochdale, where the family settled for some time, removing later to Castleton Hall, two miles away. In a communication to a local newspaper, containing some reminiscences of Rochdale as he had known it before the town had been touched by modern improvements, he wrote: 'I cannot help remembering that my own people on both sides sprang from and are buried among the brown hills that girdle Rochdale. Anything I have been able to do as a literary man or a politician, be it good or bad, has been the offspring of these, to me very attractive, hillsides, and it is not strange that one's heart should make one's pen a little effusive at the thought.' Although his range of interests was too wide to give him much time for the study of local history, he found leisure to pay a tribute to the district for which he felt so warmly in a *History of the Vicars of Rochdale*, contributed to the publications of the Chetham Society. To those who know the importance in the past of that ancient parish, covering a huge area upon the eastern border of Lancashire, the task was well worth attempting.

Henry Hoyle Howorth went to school at Rossall, then recently founded to supply the need of a public school

in that part of England. One of the assistant masters was Francis John Eld, afterwards head master of Worcester grammar school, who was till quite lately a familiar figure at meetings of the Institute and was one of its vice-presidents, and for whom he retained a constant regard. From school he proceeded to the study of law, without going to a university. It is possible that, had he gone to Oxford or Cambridge, his natural versatility would have stood in the way of academic distinction, as his mind never moved easily in conventional grooves and was readily absorbed by subjects outside the common line of study. As it was, he profited considerably by his legal training, which sharpened his powers of argument and gave him facility in marshalling his facts. Law, however, did not become his serious profession. He was called to the bar at the Inner Temple in 1867, joined the northern circuit, and practised somewhat nominally as a barrister in Manchester. But his interests lay in other directions, and in 1868 he began his long series of publications with an essay upon the origin of the races of Northern Russia, which was followed in 1869 by his first contribution to geological literature, expressing views upon the extinction of the mammoths—which he was to develop in greater detail and with tenacious conviction a few years later.

In 1869 he married Katharine, daughter of Mr. J. P. Brierley of Lauriston, Rochdale. During the next few years his chief studies were upon the ethnological lines of his first pamphlet. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1875, and in the following year brought out the first volume of his *History of the Mongols*, dealing with the Kalmucks and Eastern Mongolian races. This was succeeded in 1880 by a second volume in two parts, containing the history of the Tartars, and by a third, devoted to the Persian Mongols, in 1889. He had the advantage of choosing a novel subject, for which his work, a remarkable piece of detailed research, still remains the principal authority in English. As a complete survey of the history of a large group of kindred races, it is not likely to be soon superseded. Its composition was characteristic of its author's love of pursuing a topic through all its ramifications. Attracted to it in the first instance by his interest in Chinghis Khan and his monarchy, he extended

his plan to include all the Mongolian tribes, and it says much for his zeal and patience that he was able to finish with success a work of such magnitude, for which he could hope to find at best only a small circle of readers. He also published as a serial in successive numbers of *The Indian Antiquary* a history of Chinghis Khan and his ancestors, chiefly founded upon a chronicle discovered in a library at Peking.

Meanwhile he took an active part in the political life of Manchester, as a staunch but independently minded conservative who at no time was a blind follower of a party programme. A writer in the *Times*, soon after his death, quoted an account by Henry Sidgwick of a visit to the present Earl of Balfour at Whittingehame, at which Howorth, a member of his host's political committee in Manchester, was a fellow guest, and astonished him with the variety of his knowledge and his gifts of conversation. In 1886 he entered parliament as member for South Salford, and was re-elected in 1892 and 1895. He did not seek election in 1900, and, although well known in the house, he made no mark in debate. His views were expressed freely, however, in a long series of copious letters to the public press, both under his own name and the *nom de guerre* 'a Manchester Conservative.' Few writers of the day treated topics of current controversy so freely and outspokenly, and his reputation as a publicist would have been greater had he possessed the gift of conciseness and limited the range of his comments to a smaller selection of subjects.

In 1887, when his work on the Mongols was approaching completion, he returned to his geological theories with *The Mammoth and the Flood*, in which he vigorously criticised accepted theories of the uniformity of the glacial epoch, and maintained the submergence of a great part of the world by a flood, which drowned the mammoths and buried them beneath a stratum of loam gravel, while their relations in Siberia were frozen alive by a sudden change of climate. He steadily adhered to this view of the catastrophe which ended the palaeolithic age, and pursued it further in *The Glacial Nightmare* (1893) and *Ice or Water?* (1903). It naturally met with opposition from the orthodox side and found few converts; but, as

a working theory put forward by a man of originality and independence of thought, it was treated with respect.

In 1892 he received a knighthood as K.C.I.E. in recognition of his researches in Asiatic history. In the following year he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and his deserts were rewarded further by his appointment to several positions of trust in connexion with learned bodies. In 1899 he became one of the trustees of the British Museum, and in 1908 he was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments. In Manchester he was a governor of Owens College, the germ of the existing university, and a trustee and honorary librarian of Chetham College. The university of Durham conferred an honorary D.C.L. upon him. Although he had the good fortune of being in a position to choose his own kind of work, his tastes led him in directions from which, in the ordinary course of things, little fame can be expected, and the acknowledgment given to his laborious achievements as a *savant* was peculiarly grateful to him.

It is as President of the Archaeological Institute that he will be remembered by readers of the *Journal*, some of whom knew little of his other activities. He put immense energy into his tenure of the post, fully realising the importance of personal attention to the affairs of the society, and identifying himself with its objects. For a great number of years he was constantly present at its council and monthly meetings, and took special delight in presiding over its annual gatherings. On such occasions he had something to contribute to every discussion from an active brain which seemed to have taken all knowledge for its province. His observations on some particular feature of the subject in hand frequently led to a general survey which took him far afield. This, however, was not without design: he took a genuine pleasure in promoting discussion, and was never unwilling to suggest topics which were calculated to provoke healthy controversy, and leave other combatants to hunt the hare which he had started. But his real success as president was due not so much to his ability to make use of his own learning and to bring out that of others, as to his skill in making the members of the Institute at home with him

and with each other. He was fond of telling an anecdote against himself which described him as 'rather a grim, personage.' Nothing could be further from the truth, for, although he could be formidable on occasion, he was geniality itself. The youngest and least distinguished visitor to the meetings of the Institute met with as much consideration from him as he gave to famous archaeologists, and, however diffident he might be, was made to feel that he was of some account in the proceedings.

During the later years of his life Sir Henry, who had always taken a lively interest in ecclesiastical questions from the point of view of a layman independent of party and critical of dogma, gave much attention to the history of the Anglo-Saxon church, and produced with great rapidity volumes on *St. Gregory the Great* (1912), *Augustine the Missionary* (1913), and *The Golden Days of the Early English Church* (1916). The last of these, in three volumes, is a remarkable compendium of all the available information upon the church history of the seventh and eighth centuries, and in all there is much vivacious writing of a strongly controversial character. It cannot be said that these books opened up new ground, as the field had already been well worked by accomplished scholars; but they have their value to students as presenting the point of view of one who had earned his right to be heard with respect, and expressed himself with devotion to what he believed to be true and without regard for received opinion where it was at conflict with his convictions. While writing these, he was also busy with a minute study of the Saxon Chronicle and allied texts, which he left unfinished at his death. Portions of this have appeared in the *Journal*, and, though the main reasoning is somewhat obscured by the mass of elaborate detail, their contribution to a more complete knowledge of the relations between the manuscripts and to a more accurate estimate of their historical value has been generally recognised.

It has been possible here to touch only upon certain prominent aspects of Sir Henry's literary work. As president of the Royal Numismatic and the Viking Societies, he contributed to their publications, and one of his last works, a study of the chronicle of Nennius, ancillary to his writings on early English history, appeared in *Archaeologia*

Cambrensis. Although his habit of long and persistent work told considerably upon his health, he bore his years lightly and never lost his youthfulness of mind. The death of Lady Howorth in 1921 was the severance of a long and happy partnership of fifty-two years, and, although he was able to attend the Institute meeting at Gloucester in July of that year and that at Ripon in the year following, such efforts began to be too much for his strength. Towards the end of his life, a letter written to the *Times* upon the desirability of forming a collection of replicas of famous pictures—he had himself presented pictures to the National Gallery—alluded to the invalid chair to which he had been obliged to take, and in which he made preparations for a revised edition of his *History of the Mongols*. His death took place only a few days before the Institute met at Norwich. On 19th July, his body was taken to St. Philip's, Earls Court Road, and, after the first part of the funeral service had been read there, was buried beside that of his wife in Putney Vale cemetery. We have lost in him a mind of unusual power and of a universal character rare in days when most men are compelled to confine themselves to some special corner of knowledge. Whatever limitations were imposed by his versatility upon the permanence of his writings as a contribution to knowledge, he was still the model of the student whose zeal for fresh knowledge custom cannot stale nor old age dim, and the unabated energy of his last years leaves in the minds of those who knew him a vivid memory of the

> gray spirit, yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

A. H. T.

The portrait of Sir Henry Howorth facing page 305 is by Mr. W. E. Miller, F.S.A.