

VIII.—THE LATE SIR C. E. TREVELYAN, BART.

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[Read on the 28th August, 1886.]

SINCE I last had the pleasure of attending a meeting in this hall we have been deprived by death of one of our Vice-Presidents, Sir Charles Trevelyan. Our deceased friend was a man of so great eminence, and had conferred such important benefits upon England and England's brightest jewel, the Empire of India, that the circumstance of his death has evoked the lamentations of the leading organs of public opinion, I may almost venture to say, throughout the whole civilised world, whilst at the same time the record of his deeds has excited their admiration. Little, therefore, is left for us to do besides saying what we saw of him as a friend and a neighbour. I may, however, be permitted to glance at his early career.

The Trevelyans are an ancient family. The name indicates an early British date, long before the intrusion of the Norman William amongst us. I shall not, however, venture upon the pedigree of the family. Sir Charles was the son of the Rev. George Trevelyan, Rector of Nettlecombe, Somersetshire, and he was born there in 1807. So early as 1831 we find him holding an important appointment in the Civil Service of India. Here he exhibited marvellous energy of character; he was quick in discerning the right course to be pursued on all occasions, and was resolute in pursuing it. He not only did his duty himself, but he refused to screen those who betrayed the trust reposed in them. He nearly brought ruin upon himself at the outset of his career by exposing the shameful conduct of his superior in office; but he eventually succeeded in making good his charges and purging society to a great extent of the corruption which had previously prevailed in many of the public offices.

In the midst of his anxious duties his eye fell lovingly upon the elder sister of Lord Macaulay, to whom in due course he was married. Lord Macaulay, in writing home and informing his younger sister of



Melanie me
par la famille y compris
le C. M. de la gen

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the engagement, thus speaks of the happy swain : "In this country he has distinguished himself beyond any man of his standing by his great talent for business, by his liberal and enlarged policy, and by his literary merit, which, for his opportunities, is remarkable." He further goes on to say : "He has no small talk. His mind is full of schemes of moral and political improvement, and his zeal boils over in his talk. His topics; even in courtship, are steam navigation, the education of the natives, the equalising of the sugar duties, the substitution of the Roman for the Arabic alphabet in the Oriental languages." This is a most pleasing picture of our late vice-president given by one who was well qualified to form an opinion upon the merits of the individual. There are two subjects in the last sentence of the quotation that I would like to refer to, "the education of the natives," and "the substitution of the Roman for the Arabic and other Eastern alphabets." At this period the question was being hotly debated in India—shall the natives be educated in accordance with the teachings of Eastern or European literature? Most persons, for fear of arousing the prejudices of the people, were in favour of excluding the literature of the Western world from the schools. Sir Charles Trevelyan, seeing that this would be in reality dooming them in perpetuity to the darkness of Hindooism, stoutly opposed the idea; in doing so he was for long almost single-handed, but eventually he carried the day. In doing so he conferred an inestimable blessing upon the millions of India. And then, as to the substitution of the Roman for the Eastern alphabets, I am surprised that such an idea should have been entertained at that early period. When we compare the Arabic or Persic, or Japanese or Chinese, systems of writing with that of the Roman, how utterly different do they seem, and how absolutely impossible does it appear to substitute the one for the other. And yet the possibility and desirableness of it occurred to our friend half a century ago. Now we see the substitution being actually carried out, and books are being printed in the Arabic, Japanese, and even Chinese languages in the Roman characters. It would almost seem as if, before many more years have passed, we should see those characters which have been so well carved by the hands of the Romans themselves, on the tablets in our museum, made the means of the conveyance of thought by all the nations of the earth. If so, our late

vice-president will have a large share of the honour of having brought it to pass.

The impetuosity of his nature in exposing what he believed to be errors in the administration of affairs in India led, when he was Governor of Madras, to his recall for a time, but he eventually went back again to discharge the important duties of Minister of Finance.

In consequence of the failure of his health he was obliged, in 1865, to resign this post and quit for ever the shores of our great Eastern dependency. When in England, Sir Charles's energies could not be restrained. He laboured continually for the public good, and he effected many improvements in the administration of public affairs without the people knowing to whom they were indebted for them. During the period which elapsed between his first and second residence in India, he held the office of Assistant-Secretary to the Treasury in London. Whilst in this position the Irish famine occurred, and he was despatched to the sister island to battle with the destitution which prevailed, and to guide the distribution of the relief which was sent out. In this task his powers of organisation were of great use, and he was on the whole extremely successful. He was knighted for his services on this occasion.

To Sir Charles Trevelyan is chiefly to be ascribed the radical change which has recently been made in the management of the army of Great Britain. He published two pamphlets upon the subject of the abolition of the purchase of official rank in the army, and never allowed the subject to drop until his point was carried. In an article upon it in the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1871, the following passage occurs:—"Sir Charles Trevelyan has effectually disposed of the question of purchase; it is doomed; its existence is incompatible with the true nationalism of the British army." Whilst Sir Charles out of doors discussed the subject, his son, the present baronet, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, within the walls of the House of Commons urged and eventually carried it.

On retiring from public life he did not cease to employ his energies for the good of mankind. In London he laboured to reform the abuses which had crept into the administration of some of the charities there, and to mitigate the pauperism which abounded on every hand.

On the death of his cousin, Sir Walter C. Trevelyan, in 1879, Sir Charles succeeded by bequest to the estate of Wallington, and became

a resident in Northumberland. He quickly joined our Society, and we gladly availed ourselves of the opportunity of adding him to our Vice-Presidents, in place of his departed relative. He was fond of antiquarian pursuits, and, as far as his opportunities extended, he promoted them. In our Transactions* is a paper written by him on the "Discovery of Ancient Bronze Implements near Wallington," with chromo-lithographic plates of the objects. The hospitalities of Wallington, as I have had the happiness to know, were freely accorded to men of antiquarian tastes. Many of the members now present will remember the visit which not long ago they paid to Wallington, at the express invitation of Sir Charles. After enjoying the graceful hospitalities of their host and hostess, the party were conducted over the house, when every object of antiquarian interest was lucidly explained by Sir Charles. In acknowledging the thanks, which, at the close of their visit, the party rendered to Sir Charles and Lady Trevelyan, he, as you may remember, observed that "he held the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries not only in public respect, but in personal affection. Ever since he was a boy he had interested himself in such subjects, as he had had opportunity, and he had watched through long years the constant successful labours of their Society."

Sir Charles on taking up his residence in the north speedily set himself to discharge the duties becoming the Lord of Wallington. He sought the acquaintance of all his tenants, and became interested in their welfare. He knew everybody. Though not a Northumbrian himself, it is interesting to notice the good opinion which he had formed of us. Speaking at a Poor Law Conference in 1880, and denouncing the evil effects of out-door relief, he says, "In Northumberland, the wages in his neighbourhood averaged £1 per week. Then, the people were a remarkable people, and he was proud of them. They had hitherto been uncorrupted by this horrible system of State relief, and they were a thoughtful, purpose-like, thrifty, sober people." He goes on to say that there was not a single pauper on his estate at Wallington. Would that all the landlords in England could say the same!

Sir Charles took an interest in most of the affairs transpiring in the county. He put forth vigorous efforts to have a railway carried direct from Newcastle to Rothbury, and so right through the centre of

* *Arch. Ael.*, IX., 52.

Northumberland to Cornhill. If these efforts had been put forth before the railway was made from Morpeth to Rothbury, they would probably have been successful. He frequently attended the Poor Law Conferences of the northern district, which are usually held every autumn at Gilsland. When present he was the life and soul of these meetings, having something to say upon every subject which was brought forward. His views upon out-door relief were very strong. "Legal out-door relief," he said upon one occasion, "was totally unnecessary and most mischievous; it was by far the greatest demoralising influence in this country. Every man from his youth upward, looked forward to the time when he would be no longer equal to hard labour, and at the age of 60, for that was fixed in the minds of our people, he went to claim his pension. As for the women, they generally went much sooner. These people looked for support, not to their own industry, their own self-restraint, or their own thrift, but to the pensions provided by the State. Nothing would go right in England until this was set right. Our people had been corrupted by it. In the south they were entirely corrupted; in the north the people had more bone and sinew, but even there it had gone too far." When the Public Library in New Bridge Street was opened he was present, and took part in the proceedings. At the Church Congress held in Newcastle in 1881, he read a paper. In October of the same year, he gave a lecture in the hall of the Literary and Philosophical Society upon the important subject—on which he was so well entitled to speak—"Hindooism and Christianity contrasted;" in it he showed what an unspeakable blessing Christianity was to the world; and one felt, as one listened to him, that Christianity was to him not a mere thing of the intellect, but of the heart and of the life.

The last time I saw our friend was, in November last, at Scots Gap station. We had but an interview of a few moments, and yet I still feel the eager grasp of his hand, and I shall never forget the sunshine of his beaming countenance.

Sir Charles died on the 19th of June, 1886.

I will now conclude these imperfect remarks by quoting a couple of lines from a leading article in the *Times* newspaper of the Monday (June 21) following his death:—"He has passed away in his eightieth year, leaving a record long and varied, but spotless all through."