

## MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

Reminiscences of the Volunteer Movement.  
 Borough of Tynemouth 50 years ago [in 1849].  
 Centenary of the North Shields and Tynemouth Library.  
 The Wreck of the Stanley, 40 years ago [in 1864].  
 Low Lights Dock: Laying the Foundation stone [in 1864].  
 Jubilee of the Tyne Sailors Home.

Mr. Adamson also compiled a volume entitled 'Gleanings from the Records of Tynemouth,' which remains in the possession of his family.

## 2. ROBERT RICHARDSON DEES, a vice-president.

[Read on the 24th March, 1909.]

The *Tyne Mercury*, in its issue of the 16th November, 1813, contained the following announcement of marriage:

Yesterday, Mr. Robert Dees, of the Customs at this port, to Martha, third daughter of the late Mr. Robert Richardson, of this town, corn merchant.

In the autumn of the following year, in a house in Westgate street, where the Tyne theatre now stands (eldest of ten children, issue of that marriage), was born our late venerable and venerated colleague, Mr. Robert Richardson Dees. On the 30th of November last, in the 95th year of his age, the oldest member of our society, he passed away.

Robert Dees, the father, was chief searcher and landing waiter in the Customs. Soon after the advent of his first-born, he removed from Westgate street to Hanover square, and there brought up his family. In after years he lived, first in St. Mary's place, and then at Wallsend, where he died on the 11th of December, 1868, aged 78 years.

Robert Richardson Dees received his education at the far-famed commercial school of Mr. John Bruce, known to several generations of north countrymen as the Percy Street Academy. From thence he proceeded to the University of Edinburgh for a

couple of years, and then, having served articles with Mr. Henry Ingledew, a leading solicitor in Newcastle, proceeded to London and finished his legal training in the offices of Messrs. Williamson and Hill.

Admitted to practice in 1836, he took offices in Pilgrim street, on the site now covered by Pilgrim house. In the Newcastle directory for 1838 he appears as

Dees, Robert Richardson, clerk to the Board of Guardians for Castle Ward Union, 54, Pilgrim street, h[ouse], St. Mary's place.

Shortly afterwards he entered into partnership with Mr. George Bates (of the Heddon family and a solicitor in Westgate street), under the title of 'Bates and Dees.' Mr. Bates died unmarried on the 27th of June, 1850, and Mr. Dees united his interests with those of a well-known firm, that of Messrs. Donkin, Stable, and Armstrong. The senior partner of that firm, Mr. Armorer Donkin, had retired in 1847; Mr. Armstrong was becoming absorbed in the pursuits of engineering and the manufacture of artillery, and when he retired also, the firm was reorganized under the name of Messrs. Stable and Dees. Finally, in 1861, Mr. Stable withdrew, after which Mr. Dees carried on the business in his own name for ten years and then admitted his surviving partner, Mr. Thomas William Thompson.

In his profession, Mr. Dees occupied a prominent position. In addition to his clerkship of the Castle Ward Board of Guardians, which he held for about half a century, he was treasurer of the local Law Society from 1841 to 1892 and twice (1865-6 and 1874-5) held the office of president. For many years he was a member of the council of the Incorporated Law Society of the United Kingdom. On the 5th of January, 1857, he took up his freedom in the Newcastle Hostmen's Company, by virtue of his servitude with Henry Ingledew, scrivener.

Sometime in the middle of last century Mr. Dees acquired the property known as The Hall, Wallsend, and there he resided

unmarried until his decease. At Wallsend he took some little part in the public life of the village. He became a member of the Local Board of Health, a director of the local gas company, and latterly bestowed upon the community the gift of a public park.

In his early youth, Mr. Dees was a student and a scholar. Before arriving at man's estate, he became a member of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, and took a special interest in the educational work of that institution. At the October meeting of the society, in 1834, he read a paper on capital punishment which, during the following year, he issued as a pamphlet with the following title:

The Inexpediency of Capital Punishment. By Robert Richardson Dees. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Finlay and Charlton, Pilgrim street, 1835. 8vo., 40 pp.

In this brochure, the author contends that

Whether we yield to experience, or submit ourselves to the dictates of reason, the penalty of death ought no longer to be denounced against any crime, whatever be its enormity, or whatever be the frequency with which it is committed.

It appears from the Statute Book that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries exceeded all preceding ages in the number of offences that were for the first time, declared capital. It was when Bacon had succeeded in releasing the immortal spirit of philosophical discovery from the trammels which had for ages bound it to inaction, and had closed his eyes in consoling anticipations of some of the glorious results to which the new path he had opened out would conduct future inquirers;—it was when Milton had dazzled mankind with the splendours of his imagination; when Locke's profound researches had excited others to follow out his investigations into the nobler part of their being; and when Newton had unveiled many a magnificent page, before unstudied of the inexhaustible book of Nature;—it was still more during what we are told was the Augustan age of English literature, when our poets and moralists, our historians and philosophers were cultivating the taste, refining the manners, enlarging the understandings and improving the moral condition of the people—when the sciences and the useful arts were steadily advancing, and painting and music were shedding their selectest influences;—it was at the very time when the enlightened advocates of a merciful mode of legislation were demonstrating the inutility of severe

punishments, that the mantle of Draco seems to have indeed descended upon the British parliament, and that they determined to write in letters of blood the annals of advancing civilization.

Maintaining throughout the same cultured style, Mr. Dees ends his pamphlet with the striking passage which follows:

The opponents of capital punishment . . . know that when the proudest trophies of the warrior are crumbled into dust, and his victories are recorded in a mere fraction of the historian's page, the triumphs of humanity will still flourish in immortal youth, and the name of the 'philanthropist' be for ever linked with the most sacred and endearing associations; and though they do not aspire to the glory of those men, at the flame of whose enthusiasm their own has been kindled, they can justly appreciate and ardently desire that inward satisfaction which is the sure reward of everyone that has assisted in ameliorating the laws of his country. They may be assailed by some, who mistake invective for argument, and employ ridicule in the place of reason, with the charge of reckless innovation, or of puling sentimentalism; but the considerations by which they are influenced will support and animate them under every stigma; and they will not cease from their efforts, or relax in their exertions, until the punishment of death shall be totally discontinued, and all the remaining insignia of its destructive sway shall be consigned to the fate to which the rack, the stake, and the gibbet have been already doomed.

When, in 1842, an order in council was issued appointing districts for which courts of bankruptcy were to be held in the country, Mr. Dees published a handbook of practice, entitled

The Law and Practice under the Statute of 5 & 6 Vict. c. 116, for the relief of Insolvent Debtors on petition to a Court of Bankruptcy, including exemplifications of the Forms and Proceedings, together with the Statutes and Rules, and the Order in Council defining the Bankruptcy Districts. By Robert Richardson Dees, solicitor. London: R. & T. Brooks, 8, Baker street, Portman square, 1843. 8vo., lii+54 pp.

This, and the paper on capital punishment, are the only publications traceable to his pen, though it is understood that he occasionally contributed to the law journals.

At the annual meeting of the Lit. and Phil. in 1845, Mr. Dees took up the vexed question of the exclusion of novels from the society's library. He attacked the citadel of opposition

(and at the time it was a very strong one) by tabling a resolution to the effect that 'standard works of fiction' might be acquired, the selection of them being left to the discretion of the committee. He was defeated, and it was not till some years later that, after many exciting debates, the admission of novels was permitted.

In the meantime he was appointed treasurer of the institution, an office which he held from 1851 to 1864.

When Mr. Dees joined the Lit. and Phil., our own society had apartments in that institution, and in no long time after becoming a member of the one he was enrolled in the ranks of the other. Our records show that his election took place in 1839, when he was twenty-five years of age. Our predecessors recognized his undoubted abilities and speedily gave him promotion. Two years after his admission he was appointed a member of the council, and that position of honour he held, with one or two lapses, down to 1890, when he was appointed a vice-president, and so remained till his decease.

It is somewhat remarkable that, during all this long period of membership and office, Mr. Dees contributed nothing, or next to nothing, to our literature. It is true that at the meeting of the society in November, 1855, he exhibited some ancient deeds relating chiefly to property in the Broad chare, Newcastle, and that an epitome of them appears in our *Archaeologia*, 2nd series, vol. 1, pp. 36-43. But the abstracts therein printed were made by Mr. Longstaffe, and form one of the excellent series of 'Local Muniments' with which he enriched the early pages of the *Archaeologia* when he had secured a reduction of the size of that publication from cumbersome quarto to handy octavo. In like manner Mr. Dees supplied Mr. Longstaffe with the Nettlesworth charter of Bishop Bek, which appears on pages 107-8 of the second volume of that series.