VII.—OBITUARY NOTICE OF RICHARD WELFORD, Hon. M.A. (Dun.), a vice-president of the Society.

By John Oxberry.

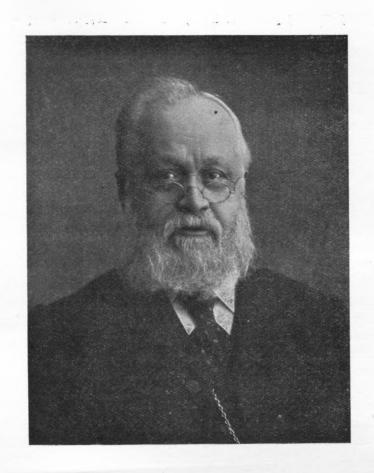
[Read on 30 July, 1919].

The most notable of the historians of Northumberland and Durham were born within the borders of one or other of these two counties. Gray, Bourne, Brand, Wallis, Hutchinson, and Surtees were all natives; and the Rev. John Hodgson, if not a native, was at any rate a north-countryman, born in the adjoining county of Westmorland.

Mr. Richard Welford, who will be ranked by future generations as a historian and biographer, with the greatest of the men just mentioned was born within the sound of Bow bells, and, nominally at least, was a Cockney. It was on the 29th of May, 1836, at Upper Holloway, on the northern skirts of London that he first saw the light. But he was still an infant when he was taken to the village of Haddenham, in Buckinghamshire, and it was in this little village that his childhood and boyhood were spent. He attended the village school. In the early years of queen Victoria's reign elementary country schools and schoolmasters were not usually so well equipped and efficient as to arouse any deep feelings of regret that they have been superseded. There were, of course, exceptions to the general rule, and one of the exceptions was apparently to be found at Haddenham. The schoolmaster there was above the average of his class, and Mr. Welford, as he approached the close of a long life, and nearly 70 years after he had left his care, still spoke of his old schoolmaster with esteem, and regarded him not only as a good teacher,

but what is even of greater importance in the training of children, as a good man endowed with the gift of inspiring his pupils to delight in well-doing. He subsequently entered the Baptist ministry and became the Rev. Giles Hester, of Sheffield.

At this village school and with this teacher Mr. Welford began and finished—to employ the accepted phrase—his education. He was ready to acknowledge that the teaching he got there was of value, that it was good as far as it went. But it was with Mr. Welford, as it has been with all men who have done much to help forward the intellectual work of the world, it was less what others taught him than what he taught himself that counted for progress. A passion for knowledge was awakened early in his breast, and with the desire for education there also arose the determination to obtain it. He was still a mere boy when he became secretary of the reading room of the village of Haddenham, and a member of a choir known as the Sacred Harmonic Society. This village choir gained, and for a number of years maintained, a considerable share of local popularity by its performances of oratorios without instrumental accompaniments. To the work of the choir, as to everything in life with which he became closely identified, Mr. Welford gave of his best. connexion with it gratified a natural taste for music which he possessed, and developed a technical and practical knowledge which in later years enabled him to while away many an hour pleasantly at an organ, often with his children seated beside him as pupils for training in the art of singing the simple old songs and hymns which he loved. A member of his family, who looks back to these occasions as to a fragrant memory, tells me that Mr. Welford was never satisfied with a slipshod performance. If a mistake occurred a fresh beginning had to be made, and the verse was sung and re-sung until the fault was corrected. This was in accordance with his practice in all things. He was



RICHARD WELFORD, Hon. M.A. (Dun.),
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a firm believer in the doctrine of thorough. If it was worth while attempting to do a thing at all, it was worth while taking pains to do it well. This was an axiom he strove to live up to with characteristic consistency throughout his whole life.

The picture of Mr. Welford seated at the organ, with his children beside him singing to his playing, is a pleasing one, and will probably be a revelation to the general public, who seldom associate so essentially domestic a picture as this with the daily life of an antiquary. But Mr. Welford's connexion with the Sacred Harmonic Society did more than foster his early love of music. It discovered in him a talent for authorship. We who have been privileged to read and profit by the latest productions of his pen, will be interested to learn that his first literary efforts were a set of verses, and a duet and chorus written for this company of singers. Both the verses and the duet were set to music by an Aylesbury musician, and the duet, according to an Aylesbury newspaper, continued to be sung for many years by the members of the choir for whose use it was penned.

During this, the later boyhood period of Mr. Welford's career, there was being published in monthly parts a new venture in educational literature—Cassell's Popular Educator. Some of us are old enough to recollect the subsequent editions of this work, and are able to comprehend, in a measure, the influence it exercised. Thousands of youths and young men were inspired by it to undertake the work of self-culture; and one of the most earnest and enthusiastic of those who sought the aid of its first issue was young Richard Welford. He became a student of several of the courses of lessons it provided on various subjects, and—such, and so strange, are the workings of destiny—it was entirely through his resolute pursuit of one of these courses, the lessons in Latin, that a set of circumstances arose, which in the

end gave Tyneside the advantage of possessing Mr. Welford as an adopted son. A difficulty he encountered induced Mr. Welford to ask the aid of the author of the Latin lessons. Dr. John R. Beard, a well-known Unitarian minister in Manchester. The explanation sought was speedily forthcoming, and was given in so kindly a fashion that Mr. Welford ventured to ask for advice and guidance in other matters. He told Dr. Beard of a desire to become a Unitarian minister, which at that particular period was the most pronounced of his ambitions. His studies had been directed towards this end, and in the eyes of a sanguine and energetic youth of seventeen years the design was beset by no insuperable difficulties. But Dr. Beard appears to have seen an obstacle in the path—probably a financial one, for Mr. Welford was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth—and in sounding him as to his other likings and aspirations elicited the confession that next to being a Unitarian minister Mr. Welford would like to be a journalist. Indeed he had already begun to dabble in journalism. He was an occasional contributor of paragraphs and news items to a local newspaper and—voung though he was-had also acted for a while as district correspondent for a London newspaper, the Morning Star. In furtherance of his journalistic ideas, it turned out that Dr. Beard was able to be of real service to Mr. Welford. He wrote about him to a friend who was a printer and part proprietor of a newspaper. friend of Dr. Beard happened to be Mr. Mark Lambert, the head of a well-known Newcastle firm of printers and publishers, and one eventful morning in the early spring of 1854, a letter from Mr. Lambert reached Mr. Welford, telling him of Dr. Beard's communication and offering him employment in the Newcastle printing office. It was an exceedingly modest beginning which was offered him. He was to start at the bottom of the ladder on a six months' trial at a wage of 10s. 6d. per week. He was

to make himself generally useful. Whether it was the typesetting, the proof-reading, or the reporting department that required his services he was to be ready to tender them; and, if he suited, his wage at the end of his period of probation would be increased to 15s. od. per week, rising in two years to two guineas per week. The prospect was not particularly enticing. He would have to live on his earnings; his relatives could give him no assistance, and 10s. 6d. per week was not much to feed and clothe a youth—he was 17 years and 10 months old when the offer reached him—with a healthy appetite. He, however, decided to accept the risk, and has often declared that he never had any reason to regret the decision. He arrived at Newcastle quayside in the London steamer Bruiser on Saturday, 25th March, 1854, and started work in the Grev Street office, where the Newcastle Chronicle was then printed, on the following Monday. Mr. Lambert proved to be a good friend. Indeed, said Mr. Welford to me on one occasion, everybody in the office, and everybody with whom he had personal relations in Newcastle, was exceedingly kind and encouraging. There was no doubt a reason for this. Generous-minded people are always ready to give a helping hand to the young man who is putting forth a genuine effort to help himself. And this Mr. Welford was doing. His working day was never a short one. For a good many years after he first came to Newcastle—I have his own admission of the truth of this-about eighteen hours out of every twenty-four were spent by him either in work at the office, or in study at home. It was a hard life, no doubt, in some respects. But Mr. Welford came through it triumphantly, and held strongly to the opinion that he was the better man for the experience. In these days of big money for short hours and a minimum of labour, it is well to recall this. Samuel Smiles's portrait gallery contains many instances of splendid effort and achievement, but not many

which surpass the example set by Mr. Welford of what may be accomplished by the young man who has pluck and energy, and is not afraid of an extra hour's work either for his own or for a neighbour's benefit.

It was an interesting period in the history of the Newcastle newspaper press over which Mr. Welford's journalistic experience ranged. The weekly newspaper reigned supreme when he started. Before he bade farewell to the work he witnessed the birth of the daily newspaper, and participated, as a sub-editor in the labour and leadership that the transition involved. It is not easy for us of this generation to realize that one who has so recently left us could look back to the time when the north of England had no daily newspaper. Nowadays we have our local morning paper beside us at the breakfast table; at midday we wait the coming of the London journal; after tea we smoke our evening pipe over our evening paper. The change which Mr. Welford witnessed in the newspaper world was enormous, but to touch at all adequately on his press career is altogether outside the scope of this notice, and though the seven and threequarter years he spent in a newspaper office are full of interest we must regretfully pass them by, with the single remark that it formed a splendid training ground for him in the work he was subsequently destined to perform for the public. It taught him how to handle the English language; and how skilfully he could use it no one has had better opportunities of judging than the members of this society; it made him acquainted with many of the leading public men of the district, and by the knowledge he acquired concerning them and their family connexions, quickened his interest in a subject which was to become peculiarly his ownlocal biography; and furthermore, and perhaps not the least important of its results, it so familiarised him with Newcastle and the ways of its people, so stimulated his appreciation of the

stirring history of the old town he had chosen as his home, as, for all practical purposes to make a Newcastle man of him.

Mr. Welford joined the staff of the Newcastle Chronicle as a general utility lad. When he left it in December, 1861, he was its sub-editor and had charge of its literary department. For the ensuing two or three years he led the life of a literary free lance. He had an office in Scaife's Court, Pilgrim Street, a little below what is now the Liberal club, and worked largely, but by no means solely, for the printing and publishing firm which had brought him to the north. The bibliography which follows tells us how part of his time during this period was employed. The combination of industry and versatility which distinguished him brought numerous commissions to his Pilgrim street office, and in the Colliery Guardian and the Mining Journal he wrote many columns of matter relating to the leading industry of the district. It is impossible now to do more than merely indicate the general trend of his activities during this portion of his career; but, in justice to his memory, I think space for a single sentence ought to be spared to state that he was one of the earliest advocates of a Miners' Permanent Relief Fund, and in March, 1862, was urging the coal owners generally, to do what a good many individual owners had already promised to do—subscribe liberally to the then newly initiated movement for the establishment of the fund.

But the chief point associated with the two and a half years that he lived the life of a literary free lance which is likely to attract the attention of members of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries, is that it was then he began seriously to apply himself to the study of local history, and the first fruits of his contact with a subject which was to develope into the main pursuit of his later years, were a *Handbook to Tynemouth*, and the Blyth and Tyne Railway, and a similar guide to the recently opened

'Waverley Route' to Edinburgh, both of which were issued in 1863.

In the year following their publication Mr. Welford migrated from Pilgrim Street to the Quayside, on his appointment as secretary to the then newly formed Tyne Steam Shipping Company, and began that long association with the commercial life of Newcastle, which was never completely severed until he was prevented from leaving his home, by the bodily infirmities that overcame him during the last few years of his life. In 1864 he was a complete stranger to commercial methods, but he possessed the capacity for concentrating his faculties on the work in hand. This had served him well during the ten years he had been engaged in journalism and literary work on Tyneside, and it proved useful to him again. He was not long on the Quayside until he began to occupy a prominent place in its daily life, and in connexion with the shipping industry in particular secured the unwavering confidence of his colleagues.

How highly they esteemed his good qualities was shown in 1893, and again in 1911, when his manifold services won for him substantial recognition from the North of England Steamshipowners' Association. From the date of its inception in 1871, he had acted as the Association's secretary, and it was on his retirement in 1893, from this post, that the late earl of Ravensworth, on behalf of a large body of subscribers, presented him with the handsome chiming clock which formed so prominent an ornament on the staircase of his home at Gosforth. In 1911, at a meeting presided over by the late duke of Northumberland, he was honoured with a second testimonial from the members of the same Association, but as he had expressed the wish that nothing in the nature of a personal gift should be bestowed, the second testimonial took the form of a benefaction to the Tyne Mariners' Benevolent Institution at Tynemouth. Mr.

Welford rose high in the service of the shipping company with whose progress his fortunes had become linked in 1864. He was beloved by the staff who worked under him; one of the company's steamers was named after him; and the late Sir William H. Stephenson, at the annual meeting of the company in 1917, was not speaking for himself alone when he expressed sorrow and disappointment that Mr. Welford was, for the first time in the 53 years of their history as a shipping company, unable through illness to be with them that day.

Mr. Welford carried out the duties of his working day life with diligence and regularity. His day's work, however, was far from being an at end when he left his office on the Quay. He always had plenty of tasks on hand to occupy any spare hour that came his way. It is quite impossible, within the limits of the time at our disposal, to do more than casually refer to a few of the numerous outlets for his energy which Mr. Welford discovered for himself.' He was one of the most cheerful and genial of companions; no one enjoyed a chat and a smoke with a kindred soul more thoroughly than he. He was a clubable man, and could enter into the spirit of a social evening with rare gusto, as some of his old companions of No. 15 at the Liberal club well know. But of his life as a whole it may truly be said that leisure to him meant simply change of occupation. As a lecturer he took his place on the platform for the first time in 1865, as a young man of twenty-nine, with a lecture on 'Newspaper work and Newspaper Men,' and he continued to delight the public with other lectures until advancing age compelled him to keep the house at nights. His most popular discourse was entitled 'Newcastle a Hundred Years Ago.' Written originally for the centenary celebration of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society in 1893, this lecture was given by him on more than fifty different occasions in Newcastle and the vicinity.

He became a resident of Gosforth in 1869, and from the first took an active part in the public life of the district. It was largely through his advocacy and personal exertions that the Gosforth Local Board, or Urban District Council as it is now called, was established in 1872. In 1873 he was elected a member of it, and from 1878 until 1885, when the work of preparing his History of Newcastle and Gateshead compelled him to resign his membership, he acted as its chairman. He was also for a time a member of the School Board, and was twice chosen overseer for the township of Coxlodge. He was an enthusiastic floriculturist and rose grower, and out of the pursuit of this hobby arose his occupancy of the post of secretary to the Gosforth and Coxlodge Floral and Horticultural Society. In many other ways he strove to serve the people of the district in which he lived: but his public activities were far from being merely parochial. In the wider field of effort offered by the claims to support urged on behalf of various Newcastle societies and social and philanthropic movements he was equally ready to render whatever assistance he could. He was one of the founders and for many years acted as secretary of the Newcastle Branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and for six or seven years was president of the Northern Phonographic Association. In 1896 he was chosen president of Newcastle Typographia -a master printers' association-and delivered an excellent presidential address on 'Newcastle Printers of the 18th Century.' It was also in 1896 that he filled the presidential chair of the Northumberland Small Pipes Society, and gave his interesting sketch of 'The Waits of Newcastle.' Scientific study occupied much of his attention. His passion for flowers made him a botanist, but astronomy was his favourite science. He had an observatory erected in his garden at Gosforth, and for a while it seems to have been doubtful whether astronomy or history was

to claim him for its own. We know that history was the victor in the contest, and the Armstrong College benefited by the result. When he came to a final decision in the matter he made a present of the excellent telescope he possessed to the college authorities for the use of the students. And so we might go on enumerating other examples of his energy, and of the wide range over which his activities extended. But sufficient instances have been cited to illustrate the marvellous physical and mental vigour which distinguished him in his prime. He gave freely and willingly to the community what his strength and talents enabled him to give; for, after the manner of the best men of the generation he belonged to, he clung to the old idea that citizenship demanded service, that to help the community was the duty of the individual. Fashions change in thought and conduct, as well as in dress. New leaders bring new notions. Not that it is the duty of the individual to help the community, but that it is the duty of the community to take charge of the individual in babyhood and coddle him into manhood is the current social teaching that holds the field. Mr. Welford and the men of his day thought otherwise.

In 1895 he was appointed a Justice of Peace for the county of Northumberland and found time to fulfil the duties of the position in a most conscientious manner. On September 25th, 1897, on the presentation of his old friend prof. Philipson—afterwards Sir George Hare Philipson—he was admitted to the honorary degree of Master of Arts of Durham: 'It is in recognition of the services he has rendered to local history and biography,' said prof. Philipson, in his presentation speech, 'that the university has selected Mr. Welford to be the recipient of one of its highest distinctions.' All of us who are here know, and the bibliography appended to this notice amply proves how well the university's compliment was merited.

That the encouragement and stimulus he received from his membership of our society was of vital assistance to him in the various self-imposed tasks he undertook, he was ever ready to acknowledge. He joined the society in March, 1879, while he was engaged in re-writing and enlarging into his History of Gostorth, what had been first written and delivered as a lecture on 'Gosforth Ancient and Modern.' He quickly took his place as a contributor to the society's work of research and exposition, and for many years remained one of the most industrious and painstaking of those who ministered to its special aims and objects. He was elected a member of the council at a meeting held specially for the purpose of appointing officers, on the 18th of February, 1801, and six years afterwards, at the annual meeting in January, 1897, he had the honour of being chosen as one of the society's vice-presidents. How keen an interest he took in the welfare of the society needs no assurance of mine; but it may perhaps be worthy of mention that right up to the moment of the last fatal seizure, when intercourse with him became practically impossible, he continued to retain the same active and unimpaired interest in the work of the society, and during the long weary months when he lay blind and paralysed on his bed, few things pleased him more than to hear from a friend a detailed account of the latest meeting of the society, to learn who had been present, and what subjects had been dealt with, and to have read to him the pages of the most recent issue of the society's Proceedings.

He became a member of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club in October, 1889, and of the Surtees Society in March, 1892. The published transactions of the former society contain one contribution from Mr. Welford on 'James Ellis, a Poetical Attorney.' He had been little more than two years a member of the Surtees Society when he was appointed one of its vice-presidents. He edited the volume of the Surtees Society's publications issued in

1905. This volume, which deals with 'Royalist Compositions during the Civil War,' is invaluable to the student of the history of the north of England in the 17th century, and contains a large number of notes that help to throw additional light on northern genealogy.

Shortly after the decision to proceed with the issue of a continuation of Hodgson's *History of Northumberland* was arrived at, Mr. Welford was co-opted a member of the committee appointed to overlook the work, and his wide knowledge and willing co-operation in the various tasks which the preparation of a publication of so much importance involved, proved of signal service to successive editors.

The Newcastle public library found a warm friend in Mr. Welford. He supported the movement which, in the face of a good deal of opposition, secured its establishment; he was among the earliest, and has been one of the most generous donors of books to it; and for several years he acted as a member of the committee that governs its affairs and selects the volumes that are to be placed on its shelves. It was appropriate, therefore, that his bust should find a place in the reference department along with the busts of several other of our local public men who have been more or less in touch with the literary life of the district. The bust was presented by him to the town on 9th February, 1912, and accepted on behalf of his fellow townsmen by the then lord mayor, Sir William H. Stephenson, in an appreciative speech.

Mr. Welford married Minnie Deverell, of London, daughter of Mr. Thomas Deverell, of the East India Company's service. The ceremony took place on 24th September, 1856. On Christmasday, 1903, after forty-seven and a quarter years of happy married life Mrs. Welford died. In her memory, Mr. Welford placed a window in the United Methodist Free Church at Gosforth.

Fifteen and a half years after Mr. Welford had followed his wife's remains to their resting place in Elswick cemetery, he himself was borne thither and laid in the grave beside her. His death took place on 20 June, 1919, in his drawing room, at Gosforth. During the later portion of his long illness this room had been utilized as his bedroom, and there very peacefully and quietly he passed away. It was in October, 1915, that the eye trouble, which eventually culminated in total blindness, began. was followed by an attack of paralysis. Loss of sight did not deprive him of the company of his well-beloved books. If he could not read them he could at least sit beside them, and one of the duties of his faithful friend and servant, Ann, who for nearly fifty years had ministered to his needs, was to lead him after blindness came upon him, whenever he was able to go, to his old seat in the library. Men who live to be old witness many scenes of sorrow, but my memory contains no picture so unutterably pathetic and tragic as that of our old friend seated there, blind and helpless, in the midst of his books. From his boyhood onward books had been his companions; he had toiled to understand and interpret them; the deepest satisfaction which life had for him was to handle them and learn from them. and tell others what they had taught him. Now, he could handle them, but he could not use them; they still had their stories to tell, but it was only by the good will of others that he could learn what they had to teach. It was painful to contemplate him sitting there. And yet there came a time, after paralysis had seized him, when even the gratification of occupying his seat in the library was denied him; when he was entirely confined to his bed. But in spite of his afflictions he bore himself, not merely patiently, but cheerfully to the end, and it is a bare statement of truth to say that while consciousness remained. cheerfulness continued to abide with him.

Mr. Welford was survived by two sons and one daughter. Now there remains but one son, for within little more than a week after his own death his elder son, Mr. Walter D. Welford, passed away in London; his other son, Mr. H. Stanley Welford is well known in Newcastle commercial circles; his daughter Mrs. Tweddle lives in Canada.

A famous author once apologized for a long letter he had just written, on the grounds that he had not time to write a short one. An apology may appear necessary for the length of It is long, however, not because of the need this notice. for time to make it shorter, but because the abundance of material renders condensation impossible. Mr. Welford had a long and active career. He loved work and was always working. His activities branched out in many different directions. I have tried to indicate the chief of these, and in doing this have endeavoured to reveal some of the leading traits of his personality as I knew it. Much more might be said both about his characteristics and his work about the lessons that may be learned from the records of his industry and achievements as an author and antiquary; about his readiness to place his knowledge at the service of all who asked it; about his sympathy, his magnanimity and his humour. But I think I have said sufficient to show. that when Mr. Welford passed away from amongst us. the north of England saw the end of a full and useful life, and those who knew him bade farewell to a charming personality. What Matthew Arnold said of his friend, may with equal truth be said of the friend we have just lost.

'Be his

Our special thanks, whose even-balanc'd soul Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild; Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.'

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