



THE LATE REV. CUTHBERT EDWARD ADAMSON,
A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

III.—NOTICE OF THE REV. CUTHBERT EDWARD ADAMSON, A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

By JOHN OXBERRY.

[Read on the 31 May, 1922.]

In the month of September, in the year 1855, the members of our Society had to mourn the loss of John Adamson. He was one of its founders, and had been one of its Secretaries from the date of its establishment up to the day of his death, a period of nearly forty-three years. At the end of another forty-three years, that is to say in the year 1898, and again in the month of September, our members had once more to express their sorrow at the passing away from amongst them of another who bore the same honoured surname. This was the Rev. Edward Hussey Adamson, a son of John Adamson, and a son who had inherited many of the gifts that distinguished the father, not the least precious of them being a taste for the investigation of subjects of antiquarian interest, and an ability to describe the result of his researches for the gratification and instruction of his fellow members.

To-day it is our mournful lot to lament the death of one more member of the same family, the Rev. Cuthbert Edward Adamson, the grandson of John, and the son of the Rev. Edward Hussey Adamson. His death removes the name of Adamson from our roll of membership, and thus severs a tie which has lasted unbroken since the foundation of our Society 109 years ago. Like his father and his grandfather he, too, was a loyal friend of our Society, and a contributor to its usefulness its value as an institution for interpreting and illustrating the past.

The late Richard Welford in the graceful tribute he paid to the memory of the Rev. E. H. Adamson in *Arch. Aeliana*, vol. xvi, p. 281, and in the biographical sketch he wrote of John Adamson in his "Men of Mark," vol. I, p. 11, tells us all that it is necessary for us to know, for our present purpose, of the immediate progenitors of the Rev. C. E. Adamson.

His father, the Rev. E. H. Adamson, went to Heworth in the year 1841, as stipendiary curate to the Rev. Matthew Plummer, then vicar of Heworth, and in the following year took over the charge of the newly-formed ecclesiastical district of Windy Nook, or St. Albans, Heworth, to give it the official designation of the order in council which created it. He married Miss Anne Potts, daughter of Mr. Matthew Potts, formerly of Bedlington, though then a resident of Carr Hill, Gateshead. The marriage took place in 1846, and pending the erection of a vicarage at Windy Nook, the young couple went to live in a house at Upper Heworth. In this house, now, and for many years past, occupied as a farmer's dwelling,¹ their first child, the Rev. C. E. Adamson was born on June 27, 1848. Apart from being the birthplace of our late vice-president, the house possesses associations that render it an object of interest to members of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries, for it was beneath its roof that the Rev. John Hodgson passed the years of his married life at Heworth. He lived there while he was acting as one of the secretaries of our Society; many of the letters printed by Canon Raine in the 'Memoir' are dated from it; most of his children were born in it; and, perhaps the most interesting association of all, it was there that he commenced the colossal task of writing a history of Northumberland, a task that he did not live to complete, that, indeed, was too great for any one man to accomplish as he planned it, but that, nevertheless, by patient and persevering industry he carried far enough to justify us in placing him amongst the greatest of county historians.

¹ See *ante* p. 49 for view of this.



It was in a dwelling-place saturated with these associations that the childhood of the Rev. C. E. Adamson was spent, and under the circumstances it is not, perhaps, surprising that he lived to be a vice-president of a society of antiquaries.

His first school was the old and now defunct Anchorage school at Gateshead, then under the charge of the Rev. William Bennett. From the Anchorage he went in 1862 to Durham school as King's Scholar, and five years afterwards began as an exhibitioner the completion of his scholastic and collegiate training at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took the degree of B.A. in 1871, and that of M.A. in 1874. He was ordained deacon in 1872, and, while holding his first curacy—that of Shirburn in the diocese of Oxford—was ordained priest by the Bishop of Oxford in 1874. A near neighbour of his while he resided at Shirburn was the late bishop Lloyd, who was curate in sole charge of a church about a mile away. A close friendship sprang up between the two young curates which lasted until the death of the bishop in 1907.

While preparing himself for holy orders, Mr. Adamson held, for a while, an assistant mastership at Abingdon Grammar school, and, at a little later period, held a similar post for about eighteen months, at Epsom college. But he was not destined for the teaching profession, nor was it in the south of England, but in his native north, that he was to carve out a career for himself. He returned to Tyneside in 1876, as a curate under Canon Chester, the incumbent of St. Hilda's church at South Shields, and was placed in charge of a mission district which had its headquarters in an ordinary dwelling-house in Somerset Street, South Shields. Under Mr. Adamson's zealous care the mission prospered, and it was not long before a special building was erected in Derby Street; and, then, in 1878, came an order in council creating the parish of South Westoe, of which Mr. Adamson was appointed the first vicar. We are not dealing here with Mr. Adamson's life as a

clergyman. Our primary object is to exhibit his services as an antiquary and to record the help he gave to historical research. And the work he, himself, did as a student of local history, to say nothing of the assistance and encouragement he gave to others engaged in the same pursuit, were, alike, worthy of the stock from which he sprang. To the district of Haltwhistle he devoted special attention, as our Society's publications sufficiently attest; and in the preface to his '*History of South Shields*,' Mr. G. B. Hodgson, after thanking Mr. Adamson for having placed unreservedly at his disposal 'an invaluable collection of material for local history,' freely acknowledges that without the encouragement he received at Mr. Adamson's hands his work would never have been entered upon.

Yet while this intense susceptibility to the call of the past was abundantly manifest throughout his career, it was after all as a diligent and painstaking parish priest that the real work of his life was accomplished. Just as his father before him, at the commencement of his life as a clergyman, had undertaken the formidable task of establishing and developing a newly created ecclesiastical district at Windy Nook, so did the Rev. C. E. Adamson, as a young and enthusiastic minister of the church he served, take upon his shoulders a similar but heavier burden in the parish of South Westoe. It detracts from neither the value nor the quality of his productions as an antiquary and historical enquirer, to say that his achievements as a clergyman constitute his chief title to public remembrance. In a special degree he merits the thanks of the inhabitants of South Westoe, who, to day, are reaping in large measure, the harvest of the seed he sowed during these, the most memorable years of his life, from 1876 to 1910, when he presided over the ecclesiastical progress of the parish and ministered to the spiritual needs of its people.

Not that the sphere of his activities was limited during these

years to his purely clerical duties. He took a wider and a truer view of his calling than this. He was a keen educationalist, and, first as a member of the old School Board of South Shields, and, later as one of the Education Committee he was for nineteen years engaged in the educational work of the borough.

His early experiences as schoolmaster may have contributed to the interest he showed in the schooling of the children amongst whom his life was cast, but, be that as it may, it was an interest that never waned, but continued undiminished until his promotion to the rectory of Houghton-le-Spring in 1910 brought his relations with his colleagues on the Education Committee to an end.

It was during the same fertile period of his life's activities, in August, 1883, that he was elected a member of our Society. In 1892 he was appointed a member of the Council, and twenty years later had the honour of being selected as one of our vice-presidents.

On 26 July, 1885, Mr. Adamson was married at Westoe to Miss Clara Isabel Haggie, a daughter of Mr. P. Haggie of Cleadon Park. The eldest child of the marriage, the Rev. Edward Blythman Adamson is still living, and is now vicar of Grangetown, near Sunderland. The second child Lieut. Francis Douglas Adamson, of the Border Regiment, was one of the many gallant young Englishmen who laid down their lives for their country in the Great War. He was only 24 when he was killed in action in France on 16th November, 1915. Twelve months afterwards, on the anniversary of the day of his death, the bishop of Durham unveiled a memorial to him in the church at Houghton-le-Spring.

It has already been casually mentioned that Mr. Adamson was promoted to the living of Houghton-le-Spring in 1910, and members of our Society who, in the summer of 1911, attended the outdoor meeting held there will not have forgotten the hospitable welcome accorded them by Mr. and Mrs. Adamson, in the old rectory garden, and will still remember how completely they both

appeared to realise the historical and traditional interest that clung round the church where Bernard Gilpin had preached and the home where he had dwelt. Houghton seemed an ideal charge for one with Mr. Adamson's tastes and temperament. But the population of the parish had grown, and with an increase of parishioners had come the inevitable increase of clerical duties.

Mr. Adamson's health and advancing years proved unequal to the strain, and in the month of December, 1920, he made it known to his congregation that the time for his retirement was drawing near. In the early months of 1921 he resigned the living and went to reside at Sunderland, and there, on the 4th May, 1922, he died:—He is survived by his widow, his daughter and two sons.

If it were possible—which it is not—to sum up a personality in a phrase, the late Rev. C. E. Adamson might be fitly described as a good specimen of the conscientious worker—a type of worker never too common, and a type that modern tendencies and conditions are rendering more uncommon than ever before. His writings as an antiquary are conscientiously thorough; so were his labours as a clergyman. The man who merits the application of such a description at the end of a long and useful career, to the work he has done during life, has served his generation worthily and requires no better epitaph.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Archaeologia Aeliana.

- 2nd ser. xvii. p. 162, The Manor of Haltwhistle.
 " " " p. 177, The church of Haltwhistle.
 " " xix. p. 14, The vicars of Haltwhistle.

Proceedings.

- 2nd ser. v. p. 100. Note on a seventeenth century tombstone at Westoe.
 " " " p. 248. On a private account-book of a lady of last century.
 " " vi. p. 163. On John Dagnia of South Shields, Glassmaker.
 " " " p. 172. Note on the origin of ancient vestries.

- 2nd ser. vi. p. 268. On religious communities in Durham and Northumberland.
- „ „ vii. pp. 63 and 66. Notes on old houses and their owners at West Auckland and St. Helen's Auckland.
- „ „ „ p. 94. Note on a schedule of deeds relating to property at Gateshead.
- „ „ „ p. 182. Note on the smoke nuisance on Tyneside in the reign of James I.
- „ „ „ p. 188. Note on a court roll of the manor of Monkseaton.
- „ „ x. p. 78. On the clergy of Newcastle and Gateshead in 1774.
- „ „ „ p. 183. On local church arrangements in the eighteenth century.
- 3rd ser. iv. p. 176. Note on a well discovered at the Roman camp, South Shields.
- „ „ v. pp. 46 and 62. On Houghton le Spring church and rectory.

PAMPHLETS AND ARTICLES IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

1893. A History of the Manor and the Church of Haltwhistle, with illustrations. South Shields, Printed by George Nicholson, 8 Barrington Street.
1897. The vicars of Haltwhistle (quarto pamphlet). Printed by R. M. Saint, Haltwhistle.
1899. Edward Hussey Adamson, Priest (octavo pamphlet). Printed by George Nicholson, 8 Barrington Street, South Shields. [A memoir of his father, 'In Piam Memoriam, Hunc Libellum Edendum Curavit, C.E.A.']
1911. On some former rectors of Houghton-le-Spring. Articles in Houghton Parish Magazine.