



*R. Blair*

## VI.—ROBERT BLAIR, M.A., F.S.A.

AN OBITUARY NOTICE.

BY JOHN OXBERRY.

(Read 26th September, 1923).

Our late senior secretary and editor, Robert Blair, M.A., F.S.A., did not live long enough to equal the forty-two years of service attained by one of the earliest of his predecessors, John Adamson, but when, on the morning of July 14th, 1923, he passed from amongst us, he had occupied the position he held for a long enough period to accomplish an amount of work for our Society that we may with perfect confidence affirm has never been surpassed. And it was for the most part quiet unseen work, but none the less work that was absolutely essential to the maintenance of the Society as a useful and effective institution. Only an enthusiast could have done all that Mr. Blair did as joint secretary and editor. To persist voluntarily, and with unswerving loyalty and ardour for so protracted a period, to carry out the duties of the twin offices he held, must have proved a sore tax sometimes on both his physical and mental powers. It was rendered possible to him because he was endowed with an eager energetic temperament, and was animated with a genuine relish for antiquarian pursuits, but chiefly because he cherished so sincere an affection for our Society, and so fervent a desire to further its progress that every effort he made on its behalf—if I may be permitted to use a sadly over-worked but appropriate phrase,—was in very truth, to him a labour of love. He found in this work, work's noblest recompense, the consciousness of having done something for the benefit of others.

His intimate friends know how completely his thoughts were centred on our Society's welfare, and even those who only saw him at our meetings must have recognised his devotion to its interests, and his readiness to give of his best in order that it might grow in usefulness and increase in strength. When he was young he cultivated his gifts, and utilised the knowledge and skill he acquired to further the objects for which our Society exists. When his years increased he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had not toiled at his self-imposed tasks in vain. The members he had served so long learned to honour and esteem him. They saw that he had no axe to grind; that the end he aimed at was the good of the Society, and because they believed this, they felt grateful to him, and though he did not live to receive the medal which was struck in his honour,<sup>1</sup> subscribers to the Robert Blair Testimonial may rest content in the full assurance that what they did was appreciated by him, and that a sick room was rendered brighter by the efforts made to mark the gratitude that members felt.

Robert Blair was born at the Lawe, South Shields, on the 8th June, 1845. He was the son of James Blair, a pilot; the grandson of Robert Blair, also a pilot; and the great-grandson of another James Blair who followed the same calling. For at least three generations the family from which he sprang had kept watch on the Lawe for incoming ships, and had done their share in the face of many dangers for the development of the trade of the Tyne. Mr. Blair was, I think, proud of his ancestry. At any rate I found him not unwilling to speak of it. I once reminded him of a passage in Thomas Salmon's 'South Shields, Past and Present,' where he speaks of his 'east end friends, the pilots,' as the familiars of his youth, and, added Mr. Salmon, 'I know that a more brave, hardy, humane and adventurous body of men is not to be found within her Majesty's wide dominions.' Mr Blair was, of course,

<sup>1</sup> An illustration from a photograph of it forms the frontispiece to this volume.



THE ROBERT BLAIR MEDAL

familiar with the reference and was ready in his own emphatic way to bear witness to its truth. In the old sailing-ship days, he said, a pilot had to know how to manipulate sails and keep his weather eye open to every movement of the breeze. He had not only to avoid shoals and sandbanks, but had to be skilled in all the tricks of seamanship. Merely to give orders to the steersman, and ring down 'Full speed ahead,' to the engineers below, was a utopian condition of things the old pilots had never dreamt of as a possibility. The Shields pilot of the past was one of a semi-isolated fraternity of strong, fearless, unaffected and unpolished men who had acquired their vigorous frames and their skill as seamen by actual contact with the perils of the winter storms that prevail on the north-east coast. The Blairs for well nigh a century had been trained and moulded in that strenuous school, and it may be said without incurring any charge of fancifulness, that the family representative whose loss we are mourning to-day, had inherited some of the sturdy and robust qualities that distinguished the men of the calling to which his forefathers belonged.

Mr. Blair's elementary education began at a dame's school, whence, after a stay of about twelve months, he graduated to a small private school at the northern termination of Mile End Road overlooking the river Tyne. The instruction he received here included a little Latin, in addition to the ordinary subjects taught at such schools seventy years ago. But what he learnt at school cannot have amounted to very much, for he was only thirteen years of age when he left to commence work as an office boy with Mr. Thomas Salmon, solicitor. Mr. Salmon was one of the leading men in the public life of his day at South Shields. He was Town Clerk, and Clerk to the Guardians, and in addition to these held several other public appointments. He was a man of considerable culture, and two years before Mr. Blair entered his service had published the first of the two parts he wrote of a

sketch of the modern history of South Shields. Mr. Blair's office experiences, under one whose activities found vent in so many different directions was sufficiently diversified to provide him with a training that is not ordinarily obtainable in a solicitor's office. But his real education was the education he won for himself after office hours. His youth was devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. He attended night classes at the South Shields Mechanics' Institute to study Latin, French and other subjects. He taught himself drawing, and strove to cultivate his faculties by a regular attendance at historical and scientific lectures. His search after self-improvement was rewarded, but he was ready to acknowledge that he owed much of what he knew to the opportunities of study afforded him by the night classes and lectures that were held at the South Shields Mechanics' Institute in the sixties of last century.

Mr. Blair served his articles with Mr. John Salmon, the son and partner of Mr. Thomas Salmon, and was admitted a solicitor at the Michaelmas Term of 1874. Shortly after this he commenced practice on his own account at South Shields, devoting himself chiefly to the conveyancing branch of his profession. Police court work he disliked. He was never eager to undertake it, and this is not to be wondered at, for his temperament was altogether unsuited to some of its requirements. He, however, established a fairly successful professional practice in South Shields for he possessed qualities that attracted clients, but we are betraying no secrets, and saying nothing in the slightest degree derogatory to his merits as a man, when we say that he was not so prosperous as he might have been if he had devoted more attention to the affairs of the present, and given less time to the study of the things of the days that are past. He followed the bent of his nature. He had no desire to accumulate riches, and sometimes expressed himself in not very complimentary terms concerning

the man who permitted the passion for money making to absorb the best of his energies and thoughts. He believed that there was a good deal in life that was better worth having than an over-gorged banking account. There was a vein of bohemianism in him that did not help to further his worldly interests. The fashions and conventions that society held to be proper he was rather prone to disregard, and he was as careless about personal gain, as he was about personal appearance.

Although he lived and died a comparatively poor man, we honour him none the less for that; indeed we who participate in his hobbies ought to honour him the more, for we cannot fail to perceive that if a man of his capabilities had striven to gather wealth as eagerly as he strove to gather and disseminate a knowledge of antiquities the result would have been different. With a readiness, a consistency and an indifference to personal advantage that has seldom been paralleled, his talents and attainments were dedicated to the furtherance of the studies he loved.

He became a member of our Society on the 7th January, 1874, a few months before he had completed his articles. John Clayton presided at the meeting when he was elected. The entry in the minute book reads, 'Mr. Robert Blair, of Harton House, near South Shields, was unanimously elected a member of this Society.' His diploma of membership is still preserved. It bears the signature of Lord Ravensworth, as president, and is countersigned by J. Collingwood Bruce and W. H. D. Longstaffe, as secretaries. All these are names that occupy a prominent place in the annals of our Society, and they are mentioned here to show the quality of the men whose antiquarian labours he was so soon to share and whose appreciation his abilities were so soon to win. His liking for antiquities was aroused while he was yet a boy by his uncle presenting him with a Roman coin that had been found

on the Lawe, near by where he was born. This, to quote his own words, set him going as a coin collector. And we know that he was only a lad of sixteen when with two youthful companions, he made his first pilgrimage along the Roman Wall from Newcastle to Chollerford. When he joined our Society he was twenty-nine. Events soon proved that he had not been idle during the thirteen years that had elapsed since his first journey of exploration along the line of the Wall. He had been but a few months a member when we find the minute book foreshadowing the active part he was to play in the excavation of the Roman Station at the Lawe. The discoveries there were then being talked about, and the secretaries of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries, though their records at this period were as meagre as they could be, still thought it worth while on the 7th October, 1874, to chronicle the fact that discoveries were being made, and that 'Mr. Blair was observing the works.' The fruits of his observation became apparent on the 3rd March, 1875, when 'Dr. Hooppell and Mr. Blair gave an interesting account of the excavation in the Lawe.' The story they had to tell was sufficiently impressive to induce the Society to form a small committee to co-operate with them. Five days later a public meeting was held at South Shields, presided over by the mayor and addressed by Dr. Bruce and others. At this meeting an excavation fund was started and a working committee elected to watch and guide operations. To this committee Mr. Blair was appointed secretary. Thus began over 48 years ago his first official connection with archaeological pursuits. The transactions of our own Society and of the London Society of Antiquaries bear witness in a measure to the painstaking manner in which he performed the duties allotted to him by the excavation committee. But the most striking witness is the diary he kept while the excavation was proceeding. Specimen entries made in December,



1877, from this diary are given on this and the following page to illustrate the way he did his work. They are a little more elaborate than the majority of the entries, but for several years with greater or lesser fulness an almost daily record on similar lines was kept by Mr. Blair. The articles found, where and by whom found, and in many instances what had become of them were duly noted. The examination of the objects unearthed, the collection of information concerning them and the regular posting of the details in his diary

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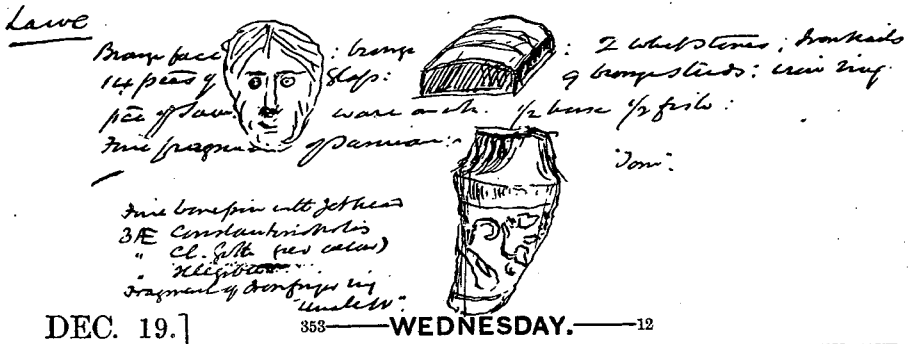
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involved a vast amount of labour. But it was a valuable training, and I think we are warranted in giving what may seem undue prominence to it here because it exhibits the characteristic thoroughness with which he did his work and shows us how he was fitting himself for the greater tasks that were to engage his energies in the future.

We glean other hints from the pages of his diary that help us to understand more clearly how Mr. Blair grew to be the all-round archaeological expert we knew him to be. He had a knowledge of

many things because he was curious about many things. His interest in the past was not confined to a period. He strove to make all periods his province, and though he specialized he did not over-specialize. A seventeenth century bell or a sixteenth century chalice was as attractive to him, from an antiquarian standpoint, as a coin of Hadrian. Because he was first and chiefly a Roman student he did not scorn the mediaevalist on the one hand, or the stone-age investigator on the other. He did not narrow his sympathies and efforts, for he recognised, as we all should, that over specialization is as surely the road to ignorance as over diffuseness is to superficiality. He steered a midway



course, and in his case, as in the case of every other man who has achieved anything noteworthy in a branch of research, it was by downright hard work persistently pursued that he obtained the comprehensive knowledge he possessed. To know what to look for is a good observer's leading qualification. Mr. Blair secured this qualification by industrious personal inquiry. His diary proves this, and its chief value for us to-day lies in the light it throws on his method of securing it. I have spent many hours over the diary he kept in the earlier years of his connection with the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries. It has been somewhat of a

revelation to me. I knew him—indeed, I think we all knew him to be a hard worker, but I had no conception of the amazing enthusiasm with which he pursued his favourite study. He was not content with book knowledge alone. He went to the fountain head and sampled the waters for himself. There is probably not a town or village in the two northern counties, where an object of historical or archaeological interest is to be seen that he did not visit. Nor were his explorations confined to this locality, they extended throughout the length and breadth of the land. His diary is full of references to these excursions, many of them taken on foot—for in his younger days he was a vigorous walker, and even within a few years of his death was not unwilling to test the powers of younger men than himself on an open country road. Then there were the cheap excursion trains that the railway companies at one time ran. These were a boon he relished and regularly utilised. The extracts will occupy a little space but I feel that I should not be doing justice to his memory, and should be neglecting strokes that are of vital importance to the portrait of him that I am endeavouring to present, if I did not quote a few examples from his diary to show how far he was willing to travel and what trouble he was willing to take in his search for first-hand information.

In connection with the two or three extracts from his diary that I propose to give, it should be remembered that the entries are mere jottings, made at the moment by a busy man, and are not finished as they might have been if made by a man of leisurely habits with nothing better to do. And short as the entries are, they were still not short enough for Mr. Blair's liking. He crowded and contracted his words until he is sometimes not easy to read. But it would diminish their snap-shot quality to print them otherwise than as they were penned, and the abbreviations, if they are taken in connection with the context, are always

understandable. Our first selected entry is for Thursday, 22nd January, 1877.

"By rail (8-30 a.m.) to Ebchester (fine old Norman Ch. in process of restorn.) defaced Rom. altar at entrance porch; thence to Medomsley (early ch. in bad state); then via Annfield Plain to Lanchester (fine Rom. Station, abt. 7 a's); to Dm. by way of Esh & Ushaw: Ret. By 7-25 tr."

Another of these immediately local expeditions is one he took on Whit Sunday 16th May, 1880.

"Left S.S. per 9-35 a.m. train for N'Castle. Walked thence via Scotswood, Lemington, Newburn (fine old ch. & pleasant ch.yd., from wh. fine view of Ryton, &c) & Throckley to Heddon-on-the-Wall. Very unpretentious lookg. ch. (with bell turret), exterior; but fine interior with Norman arch, zig-zag ornt. in chancel & origl. groined roof. Spent an hour in ch. yd. & walked thence to N'Castle, by mily. way catchg. the 7-10 train to S.S.

Heard cuckoo for first time this season."

The evidence furnished by these two extracts of the effective method he adopted for adding to his store of antiquarian knowledge might be increased a hundred fold, for he kept at it for years with undiminished ardour. But one more sample is all there is space for, and perhaps all there is need for, to enforce the point I am here urging. He had been spending the afternoon of Saturday, 22nd September, 1877, and the following morning in the Rothbury and Alwinton district with two or three companions. In the afternoon he walked by way of Pele Raw, Winter's Stob and Elsdon to Otterburn. He had previously made arrangements to meet Dr. Bruce at Falstone on Monday, September 24th, and on that date we have this entry in the diary.

"Rose at 5-40 & left Otterburn at 6 with the view of catching 1st train at Bellingm. Ar. a stiff climb of the fells betn. the Rede & No. Tyne, found when abt. 3 m. from Bellm. that I had only then abt. half an hour: immediately diverged by road to Tarsset, at wh. pl. had mortifn. to see train departing, then by way of fell road to N. of N. Tyne to Falstone, where kept prisoner for abt. 3 hrs. until my shoe repaired, then to the rectory to see coll. of the coins of the late vicar. Bot. sevl. late English ones. Left with Dr. Bruce per last train."

One of the results of his indefatigable efforts was to secure him the confidence of his fellow antiquaries. He was a frequent visitor at Chesters, and in a paper Mr. John Clayton read at one of the Society's meetings, very early in Mr. Blair's career, a complimentary reference to his attainments in numismatics appears, as well as a tribute to his energy, and to his skill as a draughtsman. Dr. Bruce and he were in constant communication very soon after he had joined our Society. Dr. Greenwell and he also, in these early days often met and discussed coins and other mutually congenial topics under Mr. Robinson's hospitable roof at Houghton-le-Spring, or at Durham. As it was with these so it was with others of kindred tastes, and when Dr. Bruce and Mr. Longstaffe announced their determination to resign the secretaryship of the Society, it is not surprising to find that Mr. Blair was turned to as one well qualified to become a successor to one of them. As a matter of fact the minute book shows that for some months prior to his actual appointment Mr. Blair had been assisting in carrying on the secretarial work. He was not appointed secretary until 31st January, 1883, but from October, 1881 the minutes are in his handwriting. He introduced a much needed change. For some time past the minute book had been kept in a very perfunctory fashion. A line or two recording the fact that a meeting had been held, and that a paper had been read was deemed sufficient. Mr. Blair took a different view of the functions to be fulfilled by a minute book. The secretary who had charge of it should, in his opinion, and his opinion is proved by his practice, play the part of a historian. He must keep his eye on posterity, and write so that those that come after may understand. The two or three lines grew, under Mr. Blair's control, to as many pages. All vital matters were chronicled; donations were entered and often a small sketch of the object accompanied the note regarding the

gift. The issue of *Proceedings* was resumed after a long interval and frequent outdoor meetings were organized.

When Mr. Blair joined the Society its affairs were at a low ebb. It was about the middle of what has been characterised as the somnolent period of our Society's existence. And though there were at that time included on the roll of membership some of the ablest men the Society has ever known, the unflattering description was warranted. The number of members was small, and something appeared to be lacking in the attractions held out for others to join. In May, 1881, the minute book tells us that 'there was no meeting as both secretaries were absent.' New blood and youthful enthusiasm seemed to be needed to root out the easy going spirit that prevailed. Mr. Blair when he became secretary was in his prime. He had completed his thirty seventh year the June previous to his election. He was keen and willing, and at the end of his first year of office Dr. Hodgkin, who had been appointed editor at the same meeting as Mr. Blair was elected secretary, moved that Mr. Blair take his place as editor, because, as he frankly confessed, though he nominally occupied the position the whole of the editorial work had been done by his colleague. The meeting acquiesced in the suggestion, and our late senior secretary and editor was accordingly on 30th January, 1884, installed in the dual office which he occupied without intermission until the day of his death. On the faithful manner that he did his work I need not here dilate, and I have already said that the total sum of that work has never been surpassed by any other member of our Society. Perhaps one of the most impressive testimonies to his devotion to his secretarial duties is revealed by the extraordinary fact, that during his forty years of office he was absent from the Society's meetings on three occasions only, and as one of these was an out-door meeting, it may be claimed for him that there were only two regular meetings of the

Society held in the Castle during a period of over forty years, when he was not in his place by the side of the chairman. He edited, as Dr. Dendy recently pointed out, 56 volumes of the Society's publications, and though he contributed but few signed papers to our transactions, he nevertheless did contribute a very large amount of valuable and original matter. If a Roman altar was unearthed or an inscribed stone discovered it often fell to his lot to write a description of it or furnish a reading. In preparing the index he entered the name of the object found, but the name of the man who had examined and explained it, when that man happened to be himself, was often left out. Modesty is no doubt a commendable virtue, but the reluctance he entertained of appearing to force his name into prominence often led him to be less than just to his reputation, and the rule of suppression he adopted materially increases the difficulty of compiling a list of his contributions. There are, however, a few of these which exhibit in so forcible a manner his diligence and patient method of investigation that they deserve special mention. First in point of time comes a list of coins that he drew up at the end of 1879 (*Arch. Aeliana*, 2 s., VIII, pp. 266-280) as an appendix to a paper by Mr. John Clayton on the discovery of a hoard of Roman coins on the line of the Roman Wall between Benwell and Rudchester. In the preparation of this analytical and descriptive tabular statement he examined 5024 coins and classified 4608 of them, allocating them to their respective periods, giving their legends and other details necessary to their identification.

A task of a similar kind was undertaken by him in 1884, when Dr. Bruce read his paper, on the Roman Camp on the Lawe at South Shields. As an appendix to this paper (*Arch. Aeliana*, 2 s., x, p. 275), Mr. Blair gave an account of the coins discovered in and near the Roman Camp on the Lawe, that had passed through his hands from 1874 to 1884. The list extends to 36 pages, and

exemplifies the careful and thorough manner in which he performed his duties as secretary of the Lawe Excavation Committee, and, at the same time exhibits such a mastery of his subject, that we are not surprised at the praises he won from such keen and accomplished students of the Roman period as Dr. Bruce and Mr. Clayton.

But the most noteworthy instance, perhaps, of his persevering prosecution of a task he had set himself is displayed in connection with the series of notes on church bells and on the communion plate belonging to churches erected prior to 1800, in the counties of Northumberland and Durham. The piecemeal manner in which these notes were published concealed their merits. They are remarkable in their comprehensiveness. The whole of the communion plate in churches within the area and period specified was examined and catalogued, except at one church where inspection was refused. The difficulty of access to church towers and bell cots debarred him, in a number of instances, from making an examination of the bells. But considering what was involved in carrying out the work, the numerous journeys he had to take to the churches, and the dust and cobwebs that had to be faced when he got there if he wanted to verify a date or obtain a squeeze of an inscription, when these troubles and obstacles are remembered, it will be admitted, I think, that he had reason to congratulate himself on the result achieved. A single sentence from his diary is indicative of what these journeys sometimes meant. He writes cheerfully rather than complainingly when he records the fact that he 'walked to Woodburn station in a storm of wind and rain, but did the 8 miles in an hour and forty minutes.' The entry is typical of the man. It was because he did his work in this spirit, disdaining the minor ills of life that some of us make so much of, that he accomplished what he did.

Another literary labour that is worth noting here, though it is





only indirectly connected with our Society, is the editing and revising of Dr. Bruce's 'Handbook to the Roman Wall,' for its publishers, Messrs. Andrew Reid and Coy. The first edition he was responsible for was the fourth edition of the book, and was issued in 1895. He has supervised each succeeding issue since then, the latest to bear his name being the eighth edition.

When Dr. Hodgkin suggested, in 1890, that the time was ripe for the issue of a new History of Northumberland, the idea, as was to be expected, elicited the hearty approval of Mr. Blair. He became a member of the Northumberland County History Committee formed to further the work, and in its earlier years, when it was engaged in collecting and arranging material for the task that had been undertaken, this Committee had in Mr. Blair one of its most active and zealous supporters.

He was elected a member of the Surtees Society on December 4th, 1877, and on the 21st April, 1879 he received an intimation that the German Archaeological Institute had appointed him a corresponding member, and forty-one years afterwards, on the 6th June, 1920, he was elected a corresponding member of the Academie Royale D'Archeologie de Belgique. In June, 1884 just when he had reached his thirty-ninth birthday, he was elected a Fellow of the London Society of Antiquaries, and a few years later was appointed its local secretary for Northumberland. When, in addition to what have just been referred to, his appointments and activities in his own immediate neighbourhood are recalled, it will be seen that for so young a man he had already achieved considerable prominence in antiquarian circles, and had become a recognised authority in at least one leading branch of investigation. And as he began so he continued, and it was to the accompaniment of a general chorus of approval that the University of Durham, on the 27th June, 1922, conferred upon him the honorary degree of Master of Arts. This distinction was merited

by his labours as an editor, and because, as Sir Theodore Morison, the Principal of Armstrong College, said when introducing him on that occasion, he had 'devoted the energy and enthusiasm of a lifetime to antiquarian research.'

The natural talent for drawing that he undoubtedly possessed, he had assiduously cultivated from his youth onward, and the skill he had acquired was frequently exercised for the benefit of his fellow antiquaries. The illustrations he drew for our publications were seldom signed, but they sometimes were referred to in the text. A good example of the use to which he put his talent may be seen in *Arch. Aeliana*, 2 s., x, pp. 148, 151, where three large wood engravings by Utting, of two Roman altars and a sculptured stone, are from his pencil. But members of our Society have a much more satisfactory chance of estimating Mr. Blair's draughtsmanship by examining the 28 large quarto volumes of his sketches that have been added to our Library shelves since his death, through the generosity of members of his family. Important additions to the Blair Collection of Antiquities already lodged in our Museum, have also reached us from the same source. Apart from their great intrinsic value and interest, these acquisitions are welcome, because they increase the strength of the bond that unites the name and memory of our late secretary to us.

Mr. Blair married in 1866, Elizabeth Eleanor Watt, daughter of Mr. James Watt, a South Shields shipowner. They had a family of thirteen children, two of whom died in infancy. Of the eleven who survived to maturity ten are still living—four sons and six daughters. Of these one son and three daughters are in Australia. Mrs. Blair died on 26th February, 1905, and is buried at Harton in the grave where he himself was laid on Tuesday the 17th July, 1923.

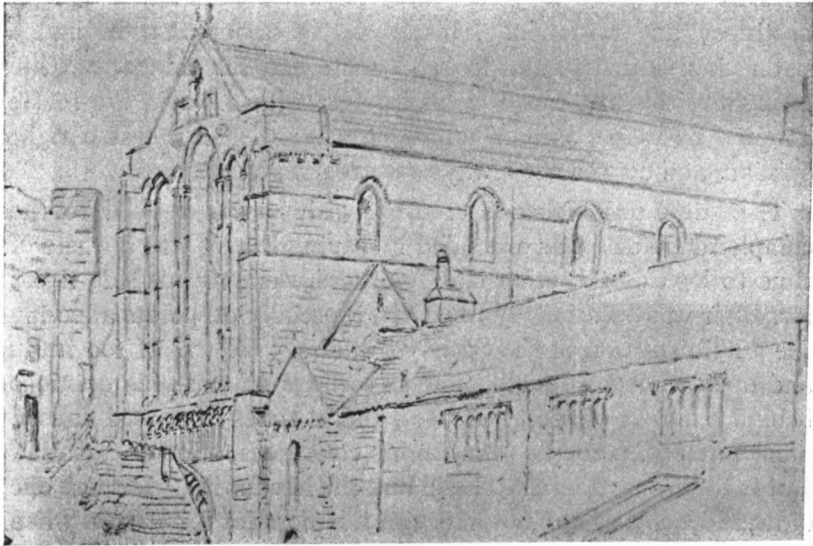
In the summer of 1907, Mr. Blair was united in marriage to Miss Mary Philipson, a member of the well-known Newcastle family of that name, and a grand-daughter of Dr. Bruce. Advantage was taken of the occasion and the fact that Mr. Blair had then filled the office of secretary for nearly twenty-five years, to present him with a silver salver, suitably inscribed, a silver card tray, and a purse of gold in recognition of his services.

The outstanding feature of Mr. Blair's career was the enthusiasm and energy he threw into his pursuit of antiquarian lore. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that no task was too onerous for him to undertake, no sacrifice of worldly advantage too great for him to make if the study of antiquities were thereby assisted, or the prosperity of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries enhanced. He had his angularities, his prejudices, his whims and moods of obstinacy and unreason. This is merely saying that he had a strong individuality, and looked on life and the things that life brought within the range of his interest with his own eyes. He adopted no man's opinion unless he was satisfied it was a right opinion, and he was not always easy to satisfy.

The late Lord Fisher is credited with having replied to the complaint that he was one sided by saying that it was a waste of time to look at the other side for there was only his side right. Mr. Blair was occasionally like that, especially on points affecting the administration of the Society's affairs. He was of too frank and open a disposition to hide his feelings or mask his opinions behind a bundle of pretty phrases, and at times expressed himself more forcibly, perhaps, than, to his colleagues, seemed essential. But is there one of us that liked him the less for it? Is there one of us, indeed, that did not like him the more for it? Even when we opposed his opinions we recognised the sincerity that prompted his utterance, and the honesty of intention that underlay his

action. It is easy to be cool if you are indifferent, and Mr. Blair was never indifferent on antiquarian matters or where the Society's interests were concerned.

He lived a useful life and a full one. He had talents and strength, and neither was allowed to lie idle. If he employed them both for the benefit of others rather than to win worldly success for himself, this ought to be counted to his credit when the final reckoning is made. And our hearts tell us that it will. For by what he gives and not by what he takes shall man's deserts be measured when his life's work comes up for judgment.



LANERCOST PRIORY, FROM THE VICAR'S GARDEN.

From Robert Blair's Sketch-book, 22/vii/96.