

ALAN IAN, EIGHTH DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND, K.G.
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY 1918-30.

I.—MEMOIR OF ALAN IAN, EIGHTH DUKE OF
NORTHUMBERLAND, K.G., PRESIDENT OF
THE SOCIETY.

BY R. C. BOSANQUET, A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

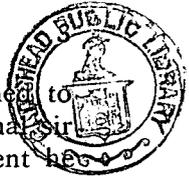
[Read on 27th August, 1930.]

The duke of Northumberland, who died on Saturday, August 23rd, 1930, honoured this society by holding the office of president from 1918, when he succeeded his father, down to the present year. He did not undertake such obligations lightly—his was a critical mind that looked for proofs of vitality and usefulness—but to institutions that passed this test he gave willing service. He was in sympathy with our aims, ready with counsel and practical help in such matters as the need of an enlarged museum for Northumbrian antiquities, or the preservation of Hadrian's Wall. As chairman of the County History committee he exerted himself to raise funds for carrying on the work, and contributed generously, as he did to so many other causes. It was his hope that the original scheme of the *History* would be varied, so that a volume might be devoted to Alnwick, and full use made of the manuscript sources in his possession; for he made himself familiar with the archives and other treasures at Alnwick and Syon, and liked to share his interest in them with others. Thus he arranged the publication of a volume of extracts from the journals of the first duchess, and wrote an introduction, a masterly sketch of the brilliant couple who from 1750 onwards gave Northumberland the leadership it had long been without. His readiness to accept new ideas was shown when he entrusted the guardianship

of Warkworth castle to the Office of Works, recognizing that the maintenance of historic ruins is a matter for the state rather than the private owner, and so set an example that others have followed, to the advantage both of the monuments and of the public. When he became chairman of the Bridges and Roads Committee of the County Council, he used his influence to prevent the destruction or mutilation of fine old bridges. Quite lately he headed the movement for founding a county branch of what is now the Northumberland and Newcastle Society, in order to preserve and increase the beauty of the countryside. In these ways he did much for the causes that a society like ours exists to promote.

But his chief interests lay in other fields. It is fitting to put on record here, if only in outline, the career of so eminent a north-countryman.

Born on April 17th, 1880, he inherited character and capacity from his father, the seventh duke, and his mother, lady Edith Campbell of the house of Argyll. He was their fourth son, and was privately educated for the army. He saw active service in South Africa with the Grenadier Guards, and again in the Sudan campaign of 1908-9, when he distinguished himself as commander of a company of Arab camel corps in Khordofan, showing a high degree of resource and endurance. Then came experience of a different kind in Canada, where he was aide-de-camp to earl Grey, the governor-general, with more feats of endurance. About this time he began to make his mark as an outspoken and sagacious writer on military problems. His logical mind, versed in the lessons of history and accustomed to look far ahead, foresaw a European war, and when he went with his regiment to France in 1914 it was to do work for which he had deliberately fitted himself. He was mentioned in dispatches, made chevalier of the Legion of Honour. In days when the front was still out of bounds for newspaper correspondents he was selected to act for a time as the "Eye-witness" who furnished official descriptions. In 1916, much against his



will, he was recalled to the War Office and attached to the Directorate of Military Operations. Field-marshal Sir William Robertson has said that in this employment he showed "sound judgment and clear foresight."

Through the death in 1909 of his gifted eldest brother—the second and third had died while he was still a boy—Alan Percy became heir to the dukedom. His marriage in 1911 to lady Helen Gordon-Lennox, youngest daughter of the seventh duke of Richmond, brought him much happiness. He succeeded to the title on his father's death, May 15th, 1918, and at the end of the war retired from the army with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, to take up new responsibilities for which the stress of his professional work had allowed little conscious preparation. It was soon apparent that a life of mingled thought and action had qualified him not only for a great variety of public and private duties, but for intellectual leadership. In this respect his career promised to resemble that of the fourth duke (1792-1865), who spent his early years in the navy and afterwards did much to advance science and historical learning. He was appointed lord-lieutenant of Northumberland, president of the county Territorial Force Association, honorary colonel of the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Tyne Electrical Engineers. In succession to his grandfather and father he presided over the Royal Institution, showing keen interest in its administration and understanding of its scientific work. For six years he was the hard-working president of the Institution of Naval Architects, attending their meetings at home and abroad, and forming friendships with shipbuilders and marine engineers. He became the principal owner of the *Morning Post* in 1924, and largely directed its policy, besides contributing signed and unsigned articles. In 1929 he was appointed chancellor of the University of Durham.

In the management of his great estates the duke was diligent and considerate. A loyal member of the Church of England, he gave large sums to build churches and

schools and to augment poor livings. He played a useful part in the councils of landlords, agriculturists and coal-owners, and readily supported any movement that made for the welfare of his tenants in town or country. When some of the farmers and farm-workers in the Alnwick district formed themselves into a discussion society, he found time to attend their meetings, at which some expert spoke on a farming problem, and to join in the debate that followed. He loved trees; it was with special pleasure that he presided last year at the inauguration of the new northern division of the Royal English Arboricultural Society, and afterwards showed them his woods at Alnwick. A responsibility that gave him keen enjoyment was the mastership of the Percy Hunt, which he held jointly with Mr. Arthur Scholefield from 1921, and alone from 1927.¹ Apart from these rural interests he gave time and thought to various organizations representing the industries and commerce of Tyneside. His alert open mind, quick to master facts and scrupulously honest in judgment, made him a force on many public bodies. As the bishop of Durham wrote on the day after the duke's death, "he was increasingly trusted and beloved."

While deep religious conviction was the mainspring of his busy life, an almost equally powerful driving-force was love of his country and fellow-countrymen, which burned like a genial fire behind outward reserve of manner. He had a soldier's pride in "the oak and courage of England," a statesman's faith in the good sense and justice of the people. His way of life was simple and self-denying, because he regarded wealth and position as a trust to be used for the common good. Though he disliked publicity, his passion for the truth led him to speak out fearlessly, now in defence of his order, now on behalf of ill-used minorities. His championship of the Southern

¹ A hunting story, *The Shadow on the Moor*, which he wrote during his last illness, appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1930, and has been reprinted. It not only attests his knowledge of Northumberland in its wilder aspects, but reveals high imaginative power.

Loyalists, whom he helped effectively with pen and purse, can never be forgotten in Ireland. He was a hard hitter, but his good temper in controversy, his belief that others must be guided by principles as high as his own, and his readiness to hear their arguments, won the respect and even the affection of opponents. If some of his early utterances were thought provocative, his latest showed growing wisdom and a sense of imperial needs that rose above the dry bones of party strife. Had he lived he must have attained to high office. Cut off in the prime of his powers, with much of his promise unfulfilled, the eighth duke of Northumberland has added lustre to the tradition of public service that is the glory of his line.