



WALTER SHEWELL CORDER

## V.—WALTER SHEWELL CORDER.

BY C. H. HUNTER BLAIR.

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Walter Shewell Corder was born at Sunderland on 27th October, 1861. He was the second son of Alexander Corder, descended from an old Quaker family of Essex, and of his wife Lucy Watson, daughter of Joseph Watson and eldest sister of the late Robert Spence Watson of Newcastle upon Tyne. In 1891 he married his second cousin, Margaret Lindsay Watson, who, with a married son and daughter, survives him. He died, at his home 4 Rosella Place, North Shields, on 24th July, 1933. After cremation his ashes were placed in the Friends' burial ground at Jordans, Buckinghamshire.

Walter Corder was educated at the Friends' school at Wigton, Cumberland; he afterwards attended classes in chemistry at the College of Physical Science (now Armstrong College), Newcastle upon Tyne. The department was then housed in rooms of the Medical College in Orchard Street, adjoining Neville Hall, as the building of the Mining Institute was then called. After leaving college he was apprenticed to his uncle, Octavius Corder, a chemist in Norwich, and then went as assistant to a Mr. Martindale, a London chemist. Shortly thereafter he came north to Kendal, where he practised as a chemist for two years, from 1883 to 1885.

In the latter year he settled at North Shields—henceforward to be his dwelling-place—and in 1888 established chemical works at the Low Lights there; some years later he entered into partnership with the late Robert William-

son, and founded the well-known firm of Williamson & Corder, glue and gelatine manufacturers of Walker on Tyne. The firm afterwards amalgamated with British Glues & Chemicals Ltd. He was the first chairman of this company, but retired from the chair after a year, owing to ill health. He, however, remained one of the directors till in recent years failing health obliged him to retire altogether.

Such, in brief outline, are the details of a long business career whose strenuous duties Walter Corder eagerly fulfilled. To the question posed by a poet he admired,<sup>1</sup>

“ Because a man has shop to mind  
 In time and space, since flesh must live  
 Needs spirit lack all life behind,  
 All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,  
 All loves except what trade can give? ”

he answered an emphatic no!

He lived a full and vivid life outside of his business. His early years at Wigton school and later at Kendal had given him a love for the mountains, lakes and dales of the lake country. He delighted, in those days, in the vigorous sport of rock-climbing, and there are few of the more famous climbs which he had not done; in his older years he took, perforce, the easier tracks to the high hills, but his love for that beautiful district remained to the end, and when able to walk only slowly, he yet loved to stroll by Crummock or Buttermere, looking up to the hills over which, like Wordsworth, he had, as a youth, “ roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock.”

When Walter Corder settled permanently at North Shields, in the late eighties of last century, he became, as was very fitting for a nephew of Robert Spence Watson, keenly interested in politics and an ardent supporter of the then great Liberal party. His enthusiastic spirit found full scope for its activities in the strenuous political life of those years. His whole-hearted enthusiasm for the cause

<sup>1</sup> Robert Browning.

he believed in so passionately is well shown by the two illustrated songs of triumph he sent to his friends after the general election of 1910, when the county and boroughs of Northumberland returned an unbroken phalanx of Liberal members to parliament. One of these delightful souvenirs is surrounded by a border of the armorial shields of the county and its boroughs, bearing as its legend the verse :

“ Never from the field of combat,  
 Never from the deadly fray,  
 Was a nobler trophy carried,  
 Than we bring with us to-day.”

The other, which his friends received with Christmas greetings from his wife and himself, depicted the good ship *Northumberland*, of ancient build, sailing, towards the sun and the palace of Westminster, from Tyne; beneath her the lines :

“ Thou sun shine on her joyously, ye breezes waft her wide,  
 Our glorious SEMPER EADEM the banner of our pride.”

Politics excepted, Walter Corder did not take an active part in the public life of North Shields, though he was for many years a justice of the peace for the borough, an office he resigned when other duties and interests made it impossible for him to fulfil its duties.

His activities in those studies which it is the special function of this society to foster, were manifold.

He was elected a member of the society on 26th July, 1893, but he had already, in 1890, presented to it a cinerary urn from Castle Rising and samian ware from Wallsend. He became a member of the society's council in 1906, and, with the exception of one or two years, served upon it until his election as a vice-president in 1930, an office he held until his death.

He was active in the affairs of the society, but did not contribute regularly to its publications. He addressed the members on 29th November, 1899,<sup>2</sup> upon the Roman fort

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings*<sup>2</sup> IX, 171.

at Jublains in Brittany and the megalithic remains at Carnac in the same district; the lecture was illustrated by a series of fine lantern slides made from his own photographs. He also lectured to the society upon the abbey of Fontevrault,<sup>3</sup> with particular reference to the effigies of the sovereigns of the house of Anjou there preserved; this also was illustrated by his own photographic slides. His chief distinction, however, as an archæologist, for which he will always be gratefully remembered by all interested in Roman Britain, was the part he took in excavating and recording, by pen and camera, the remains of the Roman fort at Wallsend (*Segedunum*); but for his exertions and interest all traces of the fort might have perished unrecorded, and the eastern end of Hadrian's wall, upon the foreshore of Tyne at Wallsend, have remained unknown. He gave an account to the society of his work on these sites on 29th April, 1903,<sup>4</sup> and again on 31st July, 1912.<sup>5</sup> The council's report for 1912 states that "to the vigilance of Mr. W. S. Corder we owe the recovery of the eastern gateway at *Segedunum* and the practical completion of the plan of that camp." He again showed his interest in Romano-British studies when he generously paid the cost of the plans and illustrations for the Roman chapter in volume XIII of the *History of Northumberland*.

Walter Corder was a great lover of music and a member of most of the musical societies of the district; one of the founders and for some years president of the Newcastle Bach Choir; a member and prominent supporter of the Chamber Music Society as well as of the Philharmonic Orchestral Society of which he was a sometime president; he also took a great interest in the North of England Musical Tournament. These societies benefited not alone by his counsel, but he gave freely and usually anonymously to those in need of financial help. Whilst the more classical music appealed most to him, his taste

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings*<sup>3</sup> II, 268.

<sup>4</sup> *Proceedings*<sup>3</sup> I, 112.

<sup>5</sup> *Proceedings*<sup>3</sup> V, 209.

was catholic, and he was for some years president of the Tynemouth Amateur Operatic Society. His loss is deplored by all lovers of music in the north. He was also interested in all forms of literature, reading widely in both poetry and prose. Here again his knowledge was placed freely at the disposal of others. He was for many years a member of the Tynemouth Public Library committee and upon the committee of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne from 1907 to his death, being a vice-president from 1920. His literary knowledge and sound judgment were of the greatest value to both these institutions—nothing that was unworthy passed his critical taste. He loved art in all its forms, though his great interest was in the graphic arts and the various processes of black and white engraving. He possessed a large and valuable collection of fine prints, the beauties and technicalities of which he delighted to explain to others not so learned in the subject as himself. He was an expert in the kindred art of photography and had brought photographic portraiture to great perfection. He used to spend many of his holidays travelling on foot in Normandy, Brittany and Norway, his knapsack and heavy camera upon his back, seeking for interesting buildings or beautiful scenery to make into pictures. His intimate knowledge of these arts made him a delightful lecturer upon such subjects as paper-making, early typography and the different processes of engraving in black and white. His expert knowledge of the latter was of much service to the Northumberland County History committee, of which he was a member during the preparation and publication of volumes XII and XIII. He was chairman of the illustrations sub-committee and as such was responsible for the illustrations, many from his own photographs, which appear in these volumes. He was also from 1905 to 1910 the active president of the Federation of the Photographic Societies of Northumberland and Durham.

This brief memoir may well conclude with a short

appreciation written by Mr. H. B. Saint, who knew Walter Corder and greatly valued his friendship.

“ Whatever was fine, Walter Corder cared for. This mind was to be seen notably in his keen interest in painting, etching, prints and music. Of etching and prints, he was probably one of the best judges in the country. The Art Committee of Armstrong College, which he served for a considerable period, appreciated his sensitive help and generous gifts. So far as the writer knows, he did not himself practise any of the graphic arts, but his innate sense of the beautiful and the skill of a clever craftsman, enabled him to produce landscapes and buildings by photography with a sympathy and quality of composition which brought them almost into the region of the creative faculties. His photographic portraits of well-known men, in their pose and values, give a pleasure not very often yielded by this medium. His patience was exemplified in his experiments in making paper from the papyrus plant which he himself had cultivated. He gave valued support to the production of music of the best kind. His slow and considered speech was always listened to with respect, and one perceived a happy sense of humour in the near background. His features were distinguished and thoughtful; his manner retiring and patient, but his influence was wider and deeper than might have been thought from his quiet ways. A man of nobility, his friends and citizenship have, by his death, suffered a great deprivation.”