

OBITUARY

RALPH HALE MOTTRAM, D.LITT.

"All I want to know is, 'Who is going on?'" once said this quiet, tolerant, liberal optimist; never one to decry the curious ramifications of a generation later than his own.

Slightly astonished, but ever very pleased with the progress of a technology he did not entirely comprehend, he was never jealous of the opportunities granted to a society produced as a result of "at least two" wars.

He was forever grateful to his parents who had offered all that was possible in the way of education in facets extra to the 3 Rs. Literature, particularly music, and even somewhat daring cultures such as archæology. Lucky he felt to have known and shared the friendship of Clarke, Cozens-Hardy, Kent, Sainty, and the many other recorders of the Norwich and Norfolk he loved so long so well. So pleased to be asked a question and if ever at a loss for an immediate answer, there it would be by telephone or letter once the elusive details had been researched and checked.

So much he discovered in his walking through Norfolk and so much he enjoyed writing down for others to know.

A gentle delighter in the puncturing of pomposity ("Which Pitt is Pitt Street named after?" "Neither, Madam; it was named for the muck pit after they stopped calling it Old Whore's Lane!"). And never so upset as by rudeness or lack of courtesy.

So pleased he would be with tributes paid after his death; particularly the national ones which got the facts slightly wrong. Sensitive always to unfavourable criticism but unfailingly cheered up by his adored and devoted wife: "It's when they stop talking about you, you have to worry," he would sum up, even if he did not quite believe it.

But eventually he answered his own question ". . . do you want to die, Ralph Hale Mottram, and to cease altogether, leaving no mark that you ever existed?" His brand of modesty had to reply to himself—"Not in the least. I have been far too fortunate to want to die. . . . A number of people, still, ask me for information, advice and encouragement. It seems a pity I should ever cease to give it. I do not know if they can obtain it from the many books I have written. I believe that, for a short time, I shall be missed."

I believe that too. But I am sure that the "deaf, gaunt, lonely, figure" with his "little cruse of courage" in his hand, goes forward hopefully, a unique specimen, pleased but still slightly astonished to have at last become A Transaction.

J. E. M.,