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In Memoriam.

JOHN LATIMER.

Mr. John Latimer, who died on January 4th, 1904, after three weeks' illness, was in his 80th year, but, advanced as he was in age, his many friends were hoping that he might yet be spared for some few years to come. Last winter he was critically ill with bronchitis, but recovered, and did much active work during the past twelve months. He was at work, indeed, so late as the Saturday night before his death, when he corrected a proof of one portion of his transcript of the city charters which, in manuscript form, he had presented to the Corporation. But he evidently felt that the end was near, and told his friend, Mr. J. E. Pritchard, so. "You will have to finish these proofs." And so it must be.

Born at Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1824, Mr. Latimer was privately educated, and largely supplemented what he learned at school by his own hard studies. At seventeen he joined the commercial staff of the *Newcastle Chronicle* as cashier; but his literary abilities soon attracted the notice of the editor, and he was frequently called upon to assist on that side. At the end of ten years one of the proprietors died, and the paper changed hands; and Mr. Latimer's editorial work gradually grew in importance, until in 1858 he was a journalist of such standing that the then proprietors of the *Bristol Mercury* invited him to become their editor. In accepting, Mr. Latimer made the third Newcastle man in succession who had filled that editorial chair. Many people in Bristol have pleasant recollections of Mr. Latimer's long reign in Broad Street, both in the days of the weekly and the morning paper. He was not only a good worker, but a man of such strong character as to make his influence felt in all directions. He set a splendid example of conscientious and responsible journalism to his staff. In his quiet, unobtrusive way Mr. Latimer earned the



Abel Lewis & Son. 1803.

John Latimer

high regard of all around him, particularly the young, who found him an unfailling friend. In 1883 his newspaper was sold, and Mr. Latimer, with two other old servants, retired on superannuation.

Beginning at the age of twelve to keep a diary, Mr. Latimer had compiled a considerable local record before he left Newcastle. In 1857 he published *Local Records*, or a historical register of remarkable events which have occurred in Northumberland and Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Berwick-upon-Tweed, from 1832 to the present time, 1857, being a continuation of the work, under the same title, published by the late Mr. Sykes.

On January 2nd, 1856, he was elected a Member of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-on-Tyne, Dr. Collingwood Bruce being then Secretary, but he resigned in 1858 on his departure from the town. When he came to Bristol he soon began to collect matter of local interest, but the calls of daily journalism prevented such close attention to the subject as he would have otherwise given. He was, however, greatly interested in the old city, and delighted in following its history, much of which he was destined to be the first to make generally known. When the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society was formed Mr. Latimer became a member, and on the death of Mr. John Taylor, in 1894, succeeded him as hon. secretary for Bristol, an office in which in turn he was succeeded (1900) by Mr. John E. Pritchard, F.S.A. Mr. Latimer was a member of the Council of the Society at the time of his death. He was also an original member of the Clifton Antiquarian Club, and in January, 1902, was made a vice-president. Members of both these societies delighted to honour a man so industrious and so accurate in matters pertaining to Bristol history.

The leisure he obtained in 1883 he put to good use. In 1887 he published *The Annals of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century*, his first important contribution to local history, which is much prized for its remarkable accuracy and freedom from prejudice.

In 1893 came the eighteenth century annals, and in June of that year Mr. Latimer's friends promoted a public banquet at the Victoria Rooms, at which he was the guest of the evening.

Mr. F. F. Fox, always one of Mr. Latimer's most helpful friends in his work as a historian, was in the chair, and the Mayor (Mr.

W. R. Barker) and a distinguished company honoured the guest. The chairman ranked Mr. Latimer with such annalists as Ricart, William Wyrcestre, Barrett, Syer, Evans, Corry, Nicholls, Pryce, and John Taylor. Certainly Mr. Latimer was entitled to very high rank among them.

In his modest speech at the dinner Mr. Latimer told how the spirit of the annalist was born in him. As a boy he was an omnivorous reader of every class of literature "save sermons." He began intending to carry on John Evans's chronological history of Bristol; but the sudden rise of daily newspapers checked the work, which had to be practically put aside until 1883. Three years sufficed to produce the first book, but four were required for the second. In that period he spent many months at the Council House, and in worrying the Town Clerk, the City Treasurer, Mr. W. George, Mr. T. D. Taylor, and others, to say nothing of the officials at the Merchant Venturers' offices, the Consistory Court, the Bodleian Library, the British Museum, the Will Office, the House of Lords' Library, etc.

Largely owing to the persuasive powers of Mr. Fox the annals of the seventeenth century were afterwards undertaken, and while that proved a stupendous task the result was a book of the greatest fascination to the Bristol student and archæologist. When the manuscript was completed there was a printer's bill to be faced. Admirable as these books are, they are of a class that appeal to few buyers. In order to testify their personal esteem, and to secure the author of the book against loss, a number of Bristolians and others subscribed about £163, and presented it, together with an illuminated address, to Mr. Latimer. This was at the end of February, 1900. Bristol's first Lord Mayor (Sir Herbert Ashman) presided over a gathering held in the very room at the Council House where Mr. Latimer had worked so often. Those who were privileged to be present are not likely to forget the racy, yet modest, manner in which Mr. Latimer again described his efforts to make the book complete and accurate.

At the solicitation of owners of the first book Mr. Latimer prepared a supplement, dealing with the years from 1887 to the end of the century.

During the winter of 1902-3 he published in his old newspaper

a series of articles which really constitute a history of the city in the sixteenth century.

Last year he issued his history of the Merchant Venturers to subscribers. Only 250 copies were printed, and the Society took 100.

He was a frequent contributor to the *Transactions* of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society and the *Proceedings* of the Clifton Antiquarian Club.

To the *Transactions* of our Society he contributed the following papers:—"On the Hundredal and Manorial Franchise of the Furcas, Tumbriil, and Pillory"; "Leland in Gloucestershire"; "On the Civil and Military History of Bristol" (read on the occasion of the visit of the Society to Bristol in 1890); "On the Manor of Clifton"; "Some Curious Incidents in Bristol History"; "The Hospital of St. John, Bristol."

In the *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club* will be found—"Bristol Commerce in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries"; "Two Ancient Bristol Mansions—Romsey's House and Colston's House"; "Shall Trelawney Die?" "Note on a Deed Relating to the Partition of the Property of St. James's Priory, Bristol"; "Clifton in 1746"; and "On Some Ancient Deeds, Principally Relating to Some Property in St. James's Parish." The paper prepared by Mr. Latimer for the first winter evening meeting of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Society was read in his absence by the Bristol secretary. It was entitled "The Mercers and Linen Drapers' Company of Bristol," and it will be printed in the *Transactions* of the Society.

Mr. Latimer's death is a serious loss to historic Bristol, and we do not know where his successor is to come from, though he did so much to awaken interest in the old city.

His knowledge and time were placed at the disposal of his fellows again and again. In the report of the Museum Committee issued only a week before his death reference is made to work he had done for that institution. He was undoubtedly a born annalist, and could clothe the dry bones of history most gracefully, while fancy never got the better of fact.

The paper which is printed in this part gives an admirable example of Mr. Latimer's work, painstaking and to be regarded as absolutely accurate with regard to matters which came within

the range of his own observation. No one who has not done some such work as that of the list of Bristol mayors would understand the amount of toilsome research which was required to produce the result that is there shown; but it is a thoroughly characteristic piece of work. Mr. Latimer has set a standard of industry and accuracy for the Bristol historians who may come after him; and those who knew the gentle, kindly old man will be grateful to the Council for providing the portrait of him which accompanies this notice.

WILFRED J. CRIPPS, C.B., F.S.A.

Mr. Cripps, whose death on October 26th, 1903, is a serious loss not only to our Society, but to all those who are interested in ancient gold and silver plate, was born in 1841, being the eldest son of the late Mr. William Cripps, M.P., by his marriage with Mary Anne, daughter of the late Benjamin Harrison, Treasurer of Guy's Hospital.

He was educated at Trinity College, Oxford, was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in 1865, and for a time went the Oxford Circuit. He did not, however, long pursue the legal profession, but devoted himself to public work and archæological and kindred pursuits. For some years he served with the Royal North Gloucester Militia, retiring with the rank of major. He was J.P. and D.L. for Gloucestershire, being Chairman of the Cirencester bench of magistrates. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries on June 3rd, 1880, and some years ago received the distinction of C.B. at the hands of the late Queen in recognition of his services to antiquarian research. He was the leading authority on old English plate, and his books on this subject had gone through several editions, being regarded as the standard works thereon.

Mr. Cripps married, firstly, a daughter of Mr. J. R. Daniel Tyssen, of Hackney, Middlesex (who died in 1881); and, secondly, Helen Augusta Wilhelmine, Countess Bismarck, daughter of Count Bismarck, of Schierstein, Prussia, who survives him.

He had been in failing health for some time, and in 1902 was laid up for several weeks at his London residence. He had, however, recovered a good deal of his strength; but he caught a chill about the middle of September, and had been confined to his bed ever since his return from a meeting of the Gloucestershire Education Committee on September 26th.

Mr. Cripps has been a helpful member of our Society from the beginning, for in the first Report his name appears as Local Secretary for the Cirencester District, and he has never relaxed his interest in our work. In 1877 he contributed a paper to the *Transactions* on "The Church Plate at Cirencester," and in 1882 one on "The Plate at Northleach"; while on April 27th, 1903, at the time when the work of describing the church plate in our district was commenced, he gave a most valuable address on the subject of "Church Plate and How to Describe it," which was afterwards printed in the *Transactions*. He also contributed a paper to volume xxi. on "A Roman Basilica," which had been discovered at Cirencester. But these papers represent but a part of the work which he did for us, for he was always willing to give information on his favourite subject, and quite recently he has given much very valuable help with regard to the list of Gloucestershire plate, which is now being prepared for publication. It is not easy to see where we are to look in future for assistance of this kind which shall be at once so thoroughly trustworthy and so readily bestowed.

DR. J. G. SWAYNE.

Dr. Swayne died on August 2nd, 1903, at the ripe age of 84 years. He was one of the last of a remarkable band who did so much to advance the fame of Bristol as a centre of medical and surgical science about the middle of the last century. As an obstetric surgeon he was famed throughout Europe, and as a professor at the local Medical School he rendered invaluable service. He was the second son of Mr. John Champeny Swayne, of Berkeley Square, senior consulting accoucher to the Bristol Dispensary, and grandson of the Rev. J. Swayne, who for fifty years was vicar of

Pucklechurch. In 1895, on retiring from the Medical School, he was entertained at dinner by the medical profession, on which occasion he was presented with a handsome gift of plate. Dr. Swayne was one of our founders as he was present at the inaugural meeting of the Society on April 22nd, 1876, and his name, with that of his brother, Mr. S. H. Swayne, and of his sister, Miss Swayne, appears in the first list of members. For many years one or both of the brothers and the sister attended our meetings most regularly. That two have passed away is one of the marks that the old order is changing and giving place to a new one. We can only hope that those of the new order will attend as regularly and take as keen an interest in the work of the Society as did those who are passing away.
