

OBITUARY NOTICE

W. Harry Rylands, F.S.A.

William Harry Rylands was the second son of Thomas Glazebrook Rylands, a member of the well-known family of north country ironmasters and manufacturers, of whom his cousin, Sir William Peter Rylands, is perhaps the most prominent in the public eye. He inherited his life-long and absorbing interest in antiquity from his father, himself a munificent patron of nearly every branch of learning, a diligent and enlightened collector of books, a fluent writer on such diverse subjects as Ptolemy's geography, the early history of Lancashire, and meteorology, besides being a practical astronomer and mathematician. Both the subject of this note and his elder brother followed their father's bent at an early age, and Professor A. P. Duncan, F.R.S., left it on record that their house at Highfields in Cheshire, after he had "spent many hours in the libraries of Mr. Rylands and his two sons", seemed to him "more like a literary and scientific institute than a private residence". In his later days, Mr. T. G. Rylands turned his attention to the study of Eastern religions, and joined in succession the then recently formed Society of Biblical Archæology and this Society. He had previously been elected F.S.A. in 1877 and was made a member of the Royal Irish Academy eight years afterwards.

It was possibly from his father's study of the exact sciences that W. H. Rylands derived his great power of rapid yet careful and accurate delineation which enabled him to transfer immediately to paper any object of antiquity set before him, whether MS., inscription, scarab, or other museum exhibit, and this before the development of photography gave him an advantage that few archæologists possessed. But this gift first became known to Orientalists when he became Secretary to the Society of Biblical Archæology in circumstances already

made known to readers of this *Journal* in the January number of 1919. Mr. Arthur Cates, in a subsequent report, did not exaggerate when he spoke of Mr. Rylands' acceptance of the office as "a fresh starting-point for the Society", and as "the period when its real development commenced", and the *Proceedings* with which he supplemented the earlier *Transactions* at once took a unique place among the publications of learned societies from the punctuality of their monthly appearance and the wealth of illustrations that they contained. For the first time even untried writers found a means of publishing either their discoveries or their views without waiting and with the Secretary's ever-ready pencil to help them, and it may be doubted whether this state of things has ever been repeated. Its effect on the fortunes of the Society may be judged from the fact that its numbers suddenly rose from 400 to 625.

In spite of the labour which this entailed and the tact and zeal displayed in recruiting fresh members and obtaining papers, he yet found time to make solid contributions to archaeology on his own account. The Hittite question had not long arisen, and his first appearance in the *Proceedings* was in the year of his election, with "Inscribed Stones from Jerabis, Hamath, Aleppo, etc." Then, in 1880, came "Comments on the Boss of Tarkondemos", one of the first Hittite inscriptions to receive adequate treatment; in 1882 his "Aleppo Inscription", to which he returned the following year; in 1884, the "Terracotta Bowl from M. Schlumberger's Collection" and on "Engraved [Hittite] Gem from Nineveh"; in 1887, the "Inscribed Lion from Marash"; and in 1898, a complete *corpus* of the Hittite inscriptions up to then discovered. In all these cases the Hittite hieroglyphs, often much rubbed and doubtful, were more accurately and graphically delineated than they could have been by photography, and they have since been made use of by nearly every Hittologist. From this corpus, too, he was able to design a fount of Hittite type, which is still in use; and he may

therefore be fairly claimed as a pioneer indispensable in the decipherment of this still mysterious language.

His Hittite work, however, by no means exhausted his activities in Oriental archæology. In 1888 he gave in the *Proceedings* the first of the Egyptian Magic Ivories, which have since been collated and interpreted. In 1884 he began the reproduction of the Hypocephali in the British Museum, which he continued until the death of his friend, Sir Peter Renouf; and in 1897 he published a *Biographical Record of Peter Lepage Renouf*, to which, in his thorough-going fashion he appended a list of all the scattered papers of that voluminous writer. Coupled with his excellent administrative work, he thus laid the Society during his period of office from 1878 to 1902 under an obligation which it would have been impossible to repay. Some slight evidence of the affection and esteem which he had at the same time inspired in the members was shown by the fine service of plate which they and other friends presented to him on his retirement.

His activity in other branches of learning was not less marked. Following again in his father's footsteps, he early joined the Holbein Society, for which he published a facsimile of "Ars Moriendi", a rare tract of 1450, and he also became a member of the Harleian, of which he was Chairman at the time of his death. For this last he edited in succession the *Heralds' Visitations* for the Counties of Bucks, Suffolk, Hampshire, Warwick, Stafford, and Berkshire, and those of Lincoln for the Lincoln Record Society. He also was much attracted by Freemasonry, and was a Past Master of the Masons' Company, Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies, a Past Master of the Lodge of Antiquity, the *Records* of which he published, and Founder and for some time Secretary of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge, to whose *Transactions* he was a constant contributor.

Personally, Rylands was one of the most charming of men. Always modest and retiring, he never sought publicity or the

distinctions to which his real learning entitled him. He was, too, entirely free from the jealousy and rivalry which is sometimes said with justice to be the bane of learned societies, and was always ready to put his knowledge and talent at the disposal of those who wanted his help. Hence he was an ideal coadjutor in archæological matters and rendered many more services to learning than have come to light. He was also one of the most warm-hearted of friends, with a keen sense of humour and a great fund of varied information. His death at the age of 74 followed on a painful illness of six years' duration, borne with perfect courage and patience; and only those who knew him well can tell what they have lost by it. His widow, formerly Miss Alice Mary Meymott, daughter of the late Charles Meymott, M.R.C.S., of Sydney, N.S.W., survives him.

F. LEGGE.