

# Yorkshire Notes and Queries.

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## PEN PORTRAIT. NO. 47.



HENRY CASAUBON DERWENT.

The subject of our sketch is a Yorkshireman by birth, he having been born in Middlesbrough, Nov. 13th, 1857. His father (Mr Wright Derwent) was a native of Fairfield, in Derbyshire. He married Ann Maria, only daughter

of Mr. William Davies, of Llanelly, and has a family of four sons and three daughters. Being brought up in the Ironopolis of Cleveland, which the late Mr. Gladstone described as "the youngest child of England's enterprise," he was

early impregnated with the fearless utilitarian spirit of that advancing borough. Beginning at the first rung of the ladder he applied himself at the initial step to the work of mastering the principles of business, and having, in a printer's office, served with profit a full apprenticeship, was appointed overseer of a large newspaper and printing business. Here he displayed such a genius for organisation that during the whole period of his service in that town he never had a serious difficulty with the men under his control. Nor has he in his subsequent business experience.

While in the Cleveland borough he took an active interest in all that was best in the social life and educational enterprise of this go-ahead community. He was asked to become a member of the School Board, but business arrangements did not permit. He showed his strong sympathies with organised trades unionism; and there is no doubt that his influence was a moderating one in a Council even at that time rather aggressively "advanced." Mr. Derwent is no Socialist, however, except in his desire to secure better opportunities and conditions of life for the workers. He has no fear of the triumph of the blatant so-called Socialism so much spoken of to-day. It is not "British." It is alien to our character and training as a people, and consequently will fail, although for a time it may appear to be gaining ground. Mr. Derwent became a member of the Typographical Society, was made President of the Middlesbrough Trades and Labour Council, established friendly relations with the sturdy leaders of the miners' unions of the north of England, and acted for his own trade at important delegate meetings, and at the Trades Union Congresses represented the workers of his native town. He was an enthusiastic Sunday school worker, and as superintendent of a very large school more than doubled its numbers.

In Oct., 1891, he was asked to join a syndicate, including the late Sir Richard Tangye and Mr. Ritzema, to start a Liberal evening paper in Birmingham. At the time Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had severed his connection with the official Liberal party; and, although Mr. Derwent's relations with the Cleveland town were of the happiest, the Birmingham venture appealed so strongly to the young journalist, that he accepted the appointment of news editor and general works manager. Subsequently, however, he took full control of the publishing department. Finding a promising field in the interest taken in manly sports and pastimes in the Midland City, especially where football was concerned, he launched the "Sports Argus," which soon recorded a Saturday sale of about 100,000 copies.

Although the daily journal was not able to do more in Mr. Chamberlain's home city than hold its own, the "Argus" was very securely established, when changes in the management and proprietorship made the post untenable by Mr. Derwent. The newer journalism and the newer methods did not appeal to the shrewd and careful manager, nor to Mr. T. P. Ritzema, and Mr. Derwent left the paper, which was ultimately secured by the Pearson "Combine."

Nine years after Mr. Derwent left Middlesbrough we find him again in Yorkshire, but now in the busy city of Bradford, as general manager of the Bradford and District Newspaper Co., Ltd., publishing the "Bradford Daily Telegraph" (the oldest daily paper in the city), and the "Bradford Weekly Telegraph." It was soon seen that the proprietors had acted wisely in asking him to become manager, and in granting him large powers and almost unlimited discretion. The company sprang forward by leaps and bounds. The premises in Market Street and Mildred Court were reconstructed and adapted for up-to-date newspaper and publishing purposes, and the conditions of labour were made more favourable to happy and good work. Mr. Derwent succeeds everywhere in drawing out, by his own sympathetic foresight, the best that his workmen can do, and the Bradford business has prospered by this in a remarkable degree. The "Daily Telegraph" has been twice enlarged since Mr. Derwent came to the office, and has now the largest circulation of any paper published in the city—morning and evening. Mr. Derwent moreover has started, and made a huge success of, a Saturday evening paper (similar to the Birmingham "Sports Argus") which is known as "Yorkshire Sports." Several other privately-owned weeklies issue from the Market Street Press, and quite a respectable book publishing business has developed since Mr. Derwent's methods have had free play—many of the works issued being of local or general scientific interest. I need not remind the readers of this magazine that "Yorkshire Notes and Queries" is also published by Mr. Derwent for the proprietors.

Nor has his work been carried on without observation. Indeed, he had scarcely been in Bradford eighteen months before one of the "blue ribbons" of newspaper management came within his reach. While working in the Midlands he had excited the notice of Mr. George Cadbury and others; and his success at Bradford was carefully noted. When Mr. Cadbury acquired the controlling interest in the London "Daily News" he was very anxious to secure Mr. Derwent's services as general manager of that great daily, and was willing to pay a con-

siderable premium to secure the Yorkshireman's help. In vain, however. The directors of his company declined to agree to his removal. "Bradford," said they, "needed good men as well as London." Without the sanction of the directors Mr. Derwent could not honourably move, as these gentlemen had trusted to his continuing with them when they, at his suggestion, entered upon the large reconstruction scheme. And although sensible of the honour conferred by Mr. Cadbury's request, Mr. Derwent himself was most anxious to wait and enjoy the fruits of his initial labours. Curiously, the fruits Mr. Derwent has always sought are opportunities for service. He is simply untiring. A newspaper man's life is, at its normal, a busy one. But with all the "extras" thrown in of social, religious, political, and personal pursuits, it becomes as strenuous as that of a Roosevelt.

Mr. Derwent is a Freemason and a member of the Ionic Lodge No. 3210 (of which lodge Wor. Bro. J. Banks Fearnley is Worshipful Master, and Bro. Walter Durrance senior warden), and naturally we find him more concerned with the ethical than the theological religious world. For the same reason we discover that his forte as a social reformer is benevolence. Not by any means, however, is he lethargic or careless as a denominationalist, for he is an honoured member and a deacon of the parent Baptist Church of Bradford. And none will frequent that place of worship without finding him very much in evidence indeed. But his best religious work is among the young and vigorous life of the churches. He is chairman of the Bradford Sunday School Union, which comprises 3,500 teachers and officers and 28,000 scholars. He is also the president of the Westgate Baptist Men's Society, which meets every Sunday, and has a most successful week evening literary section that has proved a valuable educative force in the city. But apart from definitely denominational organisations Mr. Derwent has rendered splendid service to the cause of the poor and the helpless. He is chairman of the Cinderella Club, and in connection with the "Telegraph" he has raised nearly £4,000 for this excellent object. It is hard to compute the gain to the State which that amount, wisely expended, implies. The role of the club is that of Fairy Godmother to the poor children, to comfort and feed and cheer the friendless, to reduce infant mortality, and to make child-life more than worth preserving.

Mr. Derwent is also keenly interested in the blind, and three years ago he inaugurated a

scheme whereby the grey monotony of these sightless ones might be relieved by a holiday at the seaside annually. In addition these poor people are secured against loss of wage when on holiday, well-cared for on the journey and at their holiday home, and generally charged for another weary twelve months with some of the colour-plasm of a beautiful land and sea.

Nor has Mr. Derwent been satisfied with palliative remedies. He is a member of the Board of Management of the Blind Institution, and has long advocated the establishment of a residential school for blind children, and the instruction of the adult blind. The City Education Authority has at last seen its way to a school such as Mr. Derwent has long urged should be provided; and, as a member of the committee of the Blind Training Home he himself is doing what he can to provide for the adults.

This might exhaust even a busy man's leisure, but the subject of our sketch is more than a busy man. In addition to the above-mentioned positions. Mr. Derwent is treasurer of the Bradford Corps of the St. Andrew's Ambulance Association; secretary of the Yorkshire Literary Society; and a member of the Yorkshire Antiquarian Society.

Needless to say that Mr. Derwent's habit and temper are not of the sluggish order. Quick in temper, alert to know and to sympathise, of kindly, but systematic method, workful, but hating mere "fuss," loyal to duty and to his fellow man, energetic and optimistic, tactful and eager, a man men trust and like to work with, such is Mr. Derwent. He is not only strenuous in labour, but in thought, and in friendship, and in hope. I speak that which I do know!

Newcastle.

J. G. G.

#### BEVERLEY.

"Yorkshire Notes and Queries," Sept., 1907, p. 123. In connection with Beverley Minster, I think I should have said "the satirical tone often adopted by the secular clergy of the middle ages with reference to the religious orders."

Because Beverley Minster was not then parochial, but a college of secular canons; "secular" won't cover both these and the parochials. Again, it is much more likely that friars were satirised in the misericordes, as by Chaucer and others, than monks; "religious orders" would cover both. Probably "great aversion" is too much to say without some such qualification as "sometimes" or "often" felt. The misericordes no more imply "great aversion" than do the caricatures in "Punch" now; it was mostly good-natured fun, I expect.

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