

Chapter XVIII

1903-1905

Grasmere : Tuberculosis

For three years the people of Grasmere had composed a play about their own lives. It was written in dialect and known as the Grasmere Play, entitled "From Midsummer to Martinmas", being performed in January of each year. In 1903 Hardwicke and Edith attended the third performance, which gave them great enjoyment. Hardwicke was especially delighted with the dialect which he was always keen to preserve. They gave great encouragement to the villagers by their warm praise and appreciation.

It was from this occasion that a warm friendship developed between the Simpson family who lived at The Wray, Grasmere, and the Rawnsleys. The sisters, Eleanor, Catherine and Gertrude were frequent visitors to Crosthwaite Vicarage and the Rawnsleys returned the visits to Mrs. Simpson and her daughters, taking a great interest in Grasmere events such as the Play, the Rushbearing and the Sports.

Hardwicke had immersed himself in local traditions of which he was considered to be something of an authority. He was well known for his attendance at Lake District gatherings of all kinds, e.g. agricultural shows, sheep dog trials, shepherds' meets and rushbearings. Grasmere Sports, which he attended regularly, sitting on a folding stool, sheltering from the elements, under a huge black umbrella, with a flask of tea beside him, was one of his favourites. There is a cartoon of him (now produced as a post card) in this guise, as the presiding genius of the Sports. Wrestling, Cumberland and Westmorland style, particularly interested him, so that he presented a cup to be held by the winner for a year.

There are two accounts of the Sports written by Hardwicke.¹ In the first he writes,

"What a parsons' pleasure ground that Grasmere Sports' field has become! Deans, Canons, Bishops and Archbishops are seen in the happiest and most unprofessional of moods. There is one parson at least on the Sports' Committee, and round the ring they may be counted by the scores."²

As the friendship between the Simpsons and Rawnsleys grew, there were many visits to Crosthwaite Vicarage, by the Simpson sisters. Eleanor has described her first visit, when she arrived after a cold, windy and stormy journey. The warm, peaceful atmosphere of the drawing room, dominated by the blue and white Della Robbia Annunciation, with piles of books on every table, soon dispelled the coldness and bitterness of the journey. In the evening, poetry was read aloud and amusing stories told in dialect.

Later in the year, Eleanor's sisters, Catherine and Gertrude accompanied Edith and Hardwicke on a visit to Switzerland and again in 1904, when the episode of painting out the advertisement for 'Morgen Bitters' took place.³ Hardwicke, also on this visit wrote his book, Flower-time in the Oberland,⁴ which he dictated to Gertrude who acted as his writer. In 1906 Eleanor went with Edith and Hardwicke for the first time. They visited Val d'Aosta and the Bernese Oberland with great enjoyment and deepening friendship.

Sir Francis Elliot, a friend of Hardwicke's from Balliol was the British representative in Greece. The International Archaeological Congress was to take place in March 1905 in Athens and Sir Francis invited Hardwicke to attend and take part in the proceedings. As usual he was determined to see and learn as

¹Rawnsley, H.D., Life and Nature at the English Lakes, James Maclehose, Glasgow 1899 and Months at The Lakes, 1906

²Ibid, p52

³See Chapter XIV, 1897-98, 'Temperance' pp175-176

⁴Glasgow 1904

much as possible of the ancient sites. From Brindisi he landed at Patras and visited the Stadium at Olympia, with an experienced guide sent by Sir Francis, who then took him to the Palaestra and the Temple of Zeus, then to see the Hermes of Praxiteles which twenty years before had been discovered in the mud at Olympia. Then after spending some time in Corinth he arrived in Athens for the Congress, where he met many friends and archaeologists from many nations. On the Sunday, Hardwicke preached in the Chapel of the British Legation. His sermon was entitled, "God's Gift of the Ideal" and dealt with his impressions of his visit, Greek religion and art. This was printed in an Athenian paper with several printing errors, e.g. instead of, "The Creator who dowered Hellas of old with the spirit of Truth and Beauty", "Hell" appeared instead of "Hellas"! Later he visited the Pentelicon quarries where a small model of Apollo was found soon afterwards. Some years later it was offered for sale and was bought by Hardwicke, who in 1920 presented it to the British Museum.

Tuberculosis was widespread throughout the country, including the northern counties. It was especially prevalent in the west, the industrial part of Cumberland, with its coal mines, also iron and steel works. For many years, Hardwicke had been concerned that something should be done to prevent the spread of this virulent disease and to find a cure. In 1898 he attended a conference in Marlborough House of the National Association for the Prevention of Consumption, resulting, in the following year of a Cumberland branch being formed. Hardwicke, with his characteristic energy and thoroughness, set about finding out everything he could about the disease and its possible causes, whether they could be overcome and a cure effected. He worked hard in the cause of encouraging hygiene with regard to dairy products, which were thought to be among the sources of infection. Next, he tried to ensure that there was good nursing and treatment for those who had contracted the disease. Eventually he became convinced that a sanatorium was needed in a position where fresh air and sunshine, with proper medical care, could lessen the suffering and loss of life. With Dr. Bird and a small committee, a site was found on Blencathra, above Threlkeld and in October 1904, Lady

Lonsdale opened the newly built sanitorium in the presence of a large crowd. Hardwicke was one of the members of the executive committee and worked hard in the management of the project for the rest of his life.

In 1909 the *The Herald* newspaper, printed an account of the A.G.M. of the Cumberland Branch of the National Association for the Prevention of Consumption which was held in Carlisle and presided over by Hardwicke. The Medical Superintendent of Blencathra, reported that in 1908, one hundred and fifteen patients had been treated, of whom fourteen of them had been children of school age. This led Hardwicke to appeal to the Cumberland Education Authority to follow Germany's example in providing an open air school for children at Blencathra. The Government would be willing to recognize such a school for grant purposes and, as the building would be constructed mostly of wood and iron, it would not cost very much, he thought. The report also contained the information that the average number of patients had risen by six each year. There was a plan that patients should receive treatment as early as possible and not when their illness had reached an advanced stage, as was the case then. Only seven early patients had arrived and all were doing well.

Hardwicke realized that the cost of treatment was prohibitive for poor people and suggested that this could be overcome by every little town and Board of Guardians supporting a bed, with churches having a once a year collection for a local bed. The Mayor of Carlisle supported this suggestion and it was adopted.

Over the years the scheme proved to be successful and eventually the need for the Blencathra sanitorium evaporated. It is now used as an outdoor and business centre.

In 1905 also, Hardwicke was elected proctor in Convocation, at which he was a regular attender. Although he was a good and efficient organizer, he was prone to forgetting the correct dates of

the meetings. Usually he sent a post card in rhyme, even if he was abroad, to the Dean of York, in order to ascertain if he had the right date. As in everything of which he was a member, he took an active part and in fifteen years, put forward twenty three motions, acting also sometimes as a secretary for various committees. The motions for which he was responsible, were varied and wide ranging, including the opening of shops on Sundays; "white slave" traffic; the care of churches and cathedrals; the Archbishop's Committee report on Industrial Relations; reform of liquor laws; the use and regulation of cinematographs for educational purposes; indecent literature and the censorship of post cards. Religion, for Hardwicke, embraced every facet of life. Dr. Foxley Norris, the Dean, said that Hardwicke was indeed the friend of noble causes.