

CONCLUSION

There are about 117 obituaries for Canon Rawnsley in existence, which appeared in such diverse sources as Church papers and The Sporting Times; Educational Journals and The Building News; The Bookman's Journal and The Estates' Gazette.¹

Naturally, some are to be found in the local newspapers of Cumberland and Westmorland, but many are national publications from far and wide; from Devon and Exeter to Aberdeen; Bristol to Belfast; Lincolnshire to London. The main ones are from, Birmingham, Blackpool, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Staffordshire and Yorkshire.

From reading these obituaries, it is apparent how wide ranging and multifarious were Canon Rawnsley's interests and activities; how varied and many faceted his character. Some dealt with his work as a priest, others are about his literary works; his attempts to preserve the countryside and all things beautiful; social reforms and Education; while, yet others, are concerned with leisure activities, such as Music, Art, Antiquities, Memorials, Bonfires and Sport.

These obituaries present a bewildering array of views and opinions about Canon Rawnsley, and pose the questions, "What was he really like? Was he a public benefactor, a saint, or an autocratic busy body?"

The views of those who worked with him and knew him well, may assist in answering such questions and clarifying the problem.

When Hardwicke was appointed a Canon of Carlisle, during his residence, he became a close friend of Rev. Hugh Falconer, Minister of the Presbyterian Church at Carlisle, who was impressed particularly by two things . . . " his frankness,

¹ Kindly loaned by Miss Rosalind Rawnsley, Great granddaughter of Canon Rawnsley.

brotherliness and subordination of self to the common interest" ¹ .

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In addition, Rev. Falconer appreciated Hardwicke's great kindness to him during his illness and enjoyed his generous hospitality, which was enhanced by his skills as a raconteur. At the beginning of his career, similar sentiments, about the worth of his friendship and the value and thoroughness of his work, were expressed about Hardwicke by the Mayor and leading citizens of Bristol, when he left their city. Their testimonial ended with the words, "The thought of others' needs has always been foremost in your mind".²

The Dean of Carlisle, Dr Rashdall, said of Hardwicke, that he was . . . "Full of fun and always ready for a bit of frivolity, yet he gave one the impression of alertness, and he always had his work and the serious side of life, as it were, in the corner of his eye. How he got through the amount of work that he compassed none of us could ever understand. Although he was often away pursuing his projects, either abroad or in London", the Dean concluded, . . . "yet he never neglected his parish".³

On another occasion, as the Dean was walking on the fells above Keswick, he met a man, whom he took to be a shepherd. As they walked together, talking about Keswick, the shepherd, without knowing that his companion was the Dean, talked of Hardwicke in glowing terms, saying that he visited those who were sick and old, concluding that he knew and cared for everyone. Another parishioner, according to Robert Somerville said, "I doot yon's the most active volcano in Europe".⁴

At the unveiling of the Memorial to Hardwicke in the Cathedral at Carlisle, the Dean of York referred to him as, "Rawnsley of the Lakes". After mentioning his literary achievements and work for

¹ E.F.R. - Canon Rawnsley - Glasgow 1923 - p.209.

² E.F.R. - Canon Rawnsley - Glasgow 1923, p.36.

³ E.F.R. - Canon Rawnsley - Glasgow, 1923, pp 212 - 213.

⁴ "I doubt that one is the most active volcano in Europe".

Education, the Dean said that he had made one definite contribution to the life of his generation, which was as a prophet of beauty, through his part in the creation of The National Trust. He ended his tribute by saying, "He (Hardwicke) was always a friend of high and noble causes, living a life spacious and free as the fells that he loved. And he added to his largeness of outlook meticulous care for his proper duties as parish priest, being diligent in visiting the scattered homesteads of his wide Parish. His capacity for work was prodigious. He was wonderful in friendship and in his power of impressing his personality and outlook on those who enjoyed it".¹

Dr. Sir George Adam Smith, when he unveiled the Memorial tablet to Hardwicke and Edith at Crosthwaite said of him, "He gave himself to you first, gave himself to learn and to know you one by one. Your needs whether material or spiritual, he heard as the loudest call upon his sympathies and energies. So busy a servant of public and national causes was never more loyal or more unsparing of himself in his attention to private and individual needs - of the child, the youth, the sick, the dying and the mourner" . . . "Christ was the centre of it (i.e. his life . . .)".²

It is often the tendency, in obituaries and Memorial addresses to eulogize about the deceased. The Editor of The West Cumberland Times, who would know Hardwicke well, gives a well balanced view. He mentions, . . . "his prodigious faculty for work", which was notable for its, "expedition, efficiency and excellence". In spite of his workload, he always had . . . "time to listen to others and help them". He . . . "hated mean and pernicious things and encouraged music, song, dance, honest sports, feasts and festivals". He was reactionary over some things but progressive in others". His views on Aviation could fall into the former category, while his work in the cause of Education, into the latter, Hardwick is described as . . . "an idealist and dreamer", . . . "but with the knack to bring his visions to life". Sometimes he behaved in a paradoxical way, as when he . . . "encouraged people to come to

¹ The Herald - 27th October, 1923.

² The Herald - 21st June, 1924.

Lakeland" . . . "but at the same time was the enemy of roads and railways", with the intention of keeping . . . "the region inviolate". Without transport facilities, of course, people could not reach The Lake District. ¹

Not everyone, however, thought Hardwicke was wonderful. His one time gardener called him, "A peppery old swine".² He could sometimes be strong willed and headstrong, ignoring advice, which led to his dismissal from Bristol. Some of his schemes were unpopular e.g. his campaigns against liquor and cinemas. It was due to such policies, that he made enemies, which led to him not being re-elected to The County Council. On occasions he was very authoritarian and dictatorial, especially with his statement that the local inhabitants of The Lake District were not the safest guardians of their lovely surroundings and the lack of consultation or consideration of their wishes. For this, he and his supporters were branded as, "cheap aesthetes", "noisy sentimentalists", "faddists" and "a few agitators". His offers of help were not always appreciated, as reported by The Yorkshire Post, when he wanted to help farmers as part of his war effort. Hardwicke had said that he was quite willing to go out in his shirt sleeves at six o'clock in the morning and go to any farm, to do anything that was required, such as mucking out byres or feeding pigs. A Thirlmere farmer said that he did not want to be rude to the Canon, but pitied any farmer who took him, because he would be more of a hindrance than a help.

In mitigation, of these charges, it must be noted, that whatever actions he took, were altruistic and philanthropic, with no thought of self interest, but in the firm belief that they were for the good of all. His vision, which led to the formation of The National Trust, was far sighted and touched with genius and deserves the sincere and heartfelt thanks of past, present and future generations.

¹ From the West Cumberland Times - 2nd of June, 1920.

² Some years after Hardwicke's death, his gardener visited The Fitz Museum in Keswick and when, Mr Ghandi, the curator, asked what Canon Rawnsley was really like, this was his reply.

C.M.L. Bouch¹ in describing Canon Rawnsley, quotes Canon T.B.A. Saunders, who reinforces, what others have said about his energy and perpetual motion; his friendship, hospitality and fluency as a raconteur; his prodigious literary output, much of which he considered delightful and his sense of fun. In addition, Canon Saunders says that Hardwicke was broad, muscular, deepchested, hirsute like a mariner, yet his voice was light and melodious, very beautiful when reading in Church.

Canon Saunders considered that his method of running his Parish was peculiar, as he ran hither and thither to committees in London and elsewhere, but admitted that he spent money generously on curates and lay readers, always keeping in close touch with them.² As a Canon of Carlisle, Hardwicke, was a valuable member of the Cathedral, charming unstuffy, famous, never pompous, a man of letters and also of deeds. He was, indeed, a unique and baffling personality.

At the 1951 Centenary of Hardwicke's Birth, one of his former curates Rev W.R. Burnett preached at the service. He said, "The Canon always gave of his best. Some carping critics had suggested Canon Rawnsley's theological views were nebulous, but the search for Truth was always a quest and never a conquest. He sought the truth with all his heart and mind and soul. Though a man of peace, he was frequently engaged in strife, but always to right a wrong".³ Of his Theology, Canon Saunders, said that it was off beat, but that Hardwicke wished for beneficence and good feeling in the world.

Canon Rawnsley's sense of humour came to the fore, when the publication Truth, in January 1917, as he was recovering from Edith's death and his serious illness, published an obituary notice for him. The Editor was overcome at this mistake and made

¹ C.M.L. Bouch - Prelates and People of the Lake Countries - Titus Wilson & Son Ltd, Kendal, 1948 - pp 453 - 455.

² When I asked Canon Rawnsley's Great grand-daughter how he could be away doing so many things, she replied, "he had a rich wife and three curates".

³ The Herald 6th October 1951.

ample apologies. Hardwicke was very amused by the notice, which said:- "The late Canon Rawnsley was far from being a mere sonneteer. He was one of the rulers of Cumberland for Cumberland's good. An Uppingham boy, he certainly showed what a country parson can achieve when he makes himself one with all the traditions of the countryside. He was perhaps too full of frolic for a bishop, but was far bigger than the sphere allotted to him".¹

Whatever criticisms may be levelled at, or flaws found in Canon Rawnsley, it cannot be denied, that he achieved many important things, never sparing himself in the pursuance of his high ideals. Whatever he did, he firmly believed was for the good of mankind.

In 1912, Hardwicke wrote his own Epitaph:-

Here rests at last a man whose best
Was done because he could not rest.
His wish to work, his will to serve
Were things from which he could not swerve,
Till Death came by with gentle hand
And said - "Sleep now - and understand".²

¹ E.F.R. - Canon Rawnsley - Glasgow, 1923 - p. 244.

² E.F.R., p.264, E.F.R. - Canon Rawnsley, p.264.