

## Bishop Clifford.

*President, 1877. Vice-President, 1878-1893.*

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BY THE REV. T. S. HOLMES.

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THE Society has again to record the loss of one of its Vice-Presidents. On Monday afternoon, August 14th, at a time when many of our members were on their way to Frome for our yearly gathering, Bishop Clifford breathed his last at Prior Park. The newspapers had reported his serious illness, and also the fact that he seemed to have rallied, so that the announcement of his death, and at such a time, came as a painful surprise to those of us who had known him. His position in a Society which consisted very largely of members of the Church of England, and which was wont to visit systematically the parish churches in Somerset, was naturally somewhat peculiar. His early training, however, and his great love for archæological pursuits, broke down all such barriers. He never failed to show the greatest respect and consideration for the clergy of the English Church. A devoted antiquary, he never allowed anything to interfere with his efforts to gain information concerning the mediæval antiquities of England. In his Presidential address at Bridgwater in 1877, he carefully described what he conceived to be the true functions of our Society :—“ All branches of science undoubtedly require wide views—but wide views can only be of value when they are based on the exact knowledge of individual facts ; and it is,

above all, the special province of local labourers and local societies accurately to ascertain those facts. As regards our County of Somerset, many long years must elapse before all the local facts of history, of geology, and of the natural sciences connected with it shall have been worked out. Much remains to be ascertained regarding the state of this portion of Britain in Roman and British times." "His own special study was that of the Roman occupation of Somerset, and the later period of the wanderings and struggles of Ælfred, and on these subjects he was always ready to discuss any questions that related to them. He was also a great student of Canon Law, insomuch that he became quite an authority on it among the members of his own Faith, and was frequently referred to by the Roman bishops in England for solutions on difficulties which baffled their own efforts. It was by his study of this subject that the present writer gained his friendship. He met him, for the first time, at Somerleaze, in 1878, and since then he is indebted to the Bishop for many letters explaining the difficulties which Berardi had suggested. Our Society, however, only knew the Bishop as an antiquary, and though a few facts concerning his personal history may not be out of place, we must confine our remarks for the most part to his labours amongst us in that capacity.

William Joseph Hugh Clifford was the second son of Hugh Charles, 7th Baron Clifford of Chudleigh, and was born at Irnham in Lincolnshire, on Christmas Eve, 1823. He was educated as a boy at Hodder Park, Stonyhurst, and Prior Park, entering in 1834 the College of Nobles at Rome, an aristocratic school, under the management of the Jesuits. He was confirmed by his maternal grandfather, Cardinal Weld, who took orders as a widower, and in 1840 was brought into prominence in being chosen to deliver on August 15th, a panegyric on the Virgin Mary, in the Templo Liberiano, in the presence of Gregory XVIth. During the next few years he was under the instruction of the well-known Jesuit, Father

Perrone, and in 1847 received minor orders from Cardinal Patrizi. That same year, owing to the college being closed on account of the Revolution, he left Rome, and at Bruges he was made a sub-deacon by Bishop Malou. Then for two years he studied at St. Bueno's College, near St. Asaph, in North Wales, and on August 25th, 1850, he was ordained priest by Bishop Hendren at the Cathedral in Clifton. There he studied for his doctor's degree, and in 1851 he again went to Rome, received his degree, and in 1852 returned to Plymouth to live with Bishop Errington as his secretary. Here he formed that life-long friendship which had so great an influence on his future. Bishop Hedley, of Newport, in his funeral sermon preached at Prior Park, said, "There was one memorable occasion upon which, whatever else might be said, he sacrificed himself, sacrificed what most would have called his prospects for loyalty to a friend." The explanation of this passage is an open secret. Bishop Errington had been appointed co-adjutor to Cardinal Wiseman, and was generally regarded as his probable successor. For certain reasons it was thought necessary that he should resign this claim, and when he refused Dr. Clifford is supposed to have supported him in his action. So Bishop Errington was promoted in 1855 to the Archbishopric of Trebizond, and Dr. Clifford, after acting as administrator of the diocese of Plymouth until the appointment of Dr. Vaughan, retired to Rome. There he spent three years at the Collegio Pio in preparation for those episcopal responsibilities which he knew would doubtless some day be imposed upon him. In Rome he always seemed at home. He was an excellent Italian scholar, and he enjoyed very much the society of the Roman prelates, and the semi-political atmosphere of the College of Nobles. One who was his fellow student during those three years recalls how he was known there for the heartiness of his characteristic laugh, a pleasant hearty laugh which many of our members can well remember.

Meanwhile in 1854, Dr. Burgess, Bishop of Clifton, died,

and the Archbishop "in partibus" administered the affairs of that See until the appointment of Dr. Clifford. He was consecrated at Rome in the Sistine Chapel on February 15th, 1857, by Pio Nono himself, Archbishop Errington and Bishop Baillu assisting, and in the following month he was enthroned at Clifton. On his arrival he found that Archbishop Errington had been obliged to close Prior Park as a religious seminary. It had been suffering from indifferent fortune for some years, and at last its financial difficulties were so great that it was handed over to the mortgagee, Mr. Raphael, and even the church vestments were sold to pay the debts on it. But Bishop Clifford took the matter again in hand, collecting enough to open the mansion as a school, and in ten years' time, by energetic begging and the sacrifice of his own private fortune, he was able to re-open, free from debt, the colleges on either side. It was henceforth one of his favourite resorts. Here his friend, Archbishop Errington, retired on the death of Cardinal Wiseman, and here he died and was buried, Bishop Clifford at the time arranging that there should be room in the same vault for his own remains to be laid by the side of those of his departed friend. But we must go back to 1865, when Cardinal Wiseman died, and the names of Dr. Errington, Dr. Clifford, and another, were forwarded to Rome with the recommendation of the Chapter at Westminster. Then it was that "loyalty to a friend" induced Bishop Clifford to write and withdraw his name in favour of the elder nominee. This action of his, following as it did that of the years 1853-5, gave considerable offence to the Pope, and was doubtless the cause why he was not further advanced in the papal hierarchy. In 1871 this independence was again displayed, when Bishop Clifford allowed it to be known at the Vatican Council that he regarded the Infallibility dogma as decidedly inopportune. But when it was announced as an article of faith he loyally accepted it, and took vigorous steps to impose it on his own clergy. Well did Bishop Hedley say, he supposed there were

few men who put self-interest on one side more effectually. Bishop Clifford, however, regained the friendship of Pio Nono, and in 1878 led the prayers at the bedside of the dying pontiff.

But we must turn to his work as an archæologist. It was in 1875, at Frome, that he read his first paper on the site of the battle of Æthandune. He had carefully studied his subject, and advanced very plausible arguments for the views he advocated. He claimed that the celebrated battle took place at Edington, in Somerset, and that after his defeat it was at Bridgwater that Guthrum was besieged. Mr. Freeman, who heard him read his paper, dissented from his view, and said that he had not weighed correctly the authorities he had studied, and it is evident that he assumed too much as to the movements of Guthrum and Ubba, in order to make his view at all credible. In 1876 he was again present, at the Bath meeting, in company with his friend, Archbishop Errington, then a resident at Prior Park. Here he read a paper on the course of the Roman Road from Aquae Solis to Isca Silurum (Caerleon), and assisted very materially in the discussion concerning the quaint figure built into the wall of Bathampton Church. He would not allow that it was that of an ecclesiastic, but was on the contrary that of a woman, and that the sculpture was probably Roman. The next year, 1877, he was again present, at the Bridgwater meeting, succeeding Mr. Jerom Murch as president for the year. The district was one which he had studied carefully, and he showed his knowledge of it, as well as his views, at Athelney, Cannington Park, and Boroughbridge. In his presidential address he gave an explanation of the nature of Ælfred's jewel, asserting that it was the handle of a bookstaff, and possibly was that given by the King to John, afterwards first Abbot of Athelney. During the excursions he pointed out at Chedzoy the consecration marks on the church; at Stoke Courcy the almsbox which had hitherto been regarded as a holy water stoup; and also certain features of interest at Dodington Manor House and Danesbury

Camp. The next year he appeared at Bruton, and read a paper on the Roman Road between Exeter and Caerleon, and during the excursions gave useful hints concerning Stavordale Priory and Penselwood Church. In 1879 he was re-elected a member of the Pen Pits Exploration Committee. Absent in 1880, he was present at Clevedon in 1881, and at Wiveliscombe in 1883. He was present also at Shepton Mallet in 1884, taking part in the discussion on Mr. Esdaile's paper on the Romans in Bath, and in 1885 at Weston-super-Mare, where he had his share of the talk on the Roman villa at Wemberham and on Woodspring Priory. In 1888 he was again present at the Wells meeting, being the guest of his friend, the Bishop of Bath and Wells. His special training again came in useful, for at Rodney Stoke he set Bishop Hobhouse right concerning the figure on the Rodney tomb, which is certainly, as he said, that of St. Elmo, and in the evening discussion he gave us some useful information concerning the religious order of St. Anthony, and their custom of keeping swine.

This, I believe, was the last time that he appeared at any of our annual gatherings. Many of his friends, especially Mr. Freeman and Mr. Dickenson, had ceased to attend, and the want of intimate contemporaries, together with premonitory symptoms of the dangerous state of his health, kept him away. When I last saw him at the Bristol Central Station, on June 26th, he told me that he hoped to come to Frome, his recollections of his former visit being so pleasant. But he never thoroughly rallied from the shock of the operation which was performed on July 22nd. On Friday, August 18th, after the impressive ceremonies of his funeral had been performed in the large church at Prior Park, he was laid to his rest in that grave in the cloister where already lay the remains of Archbishop Errington.

Bishop Clifford was an enthusiastic, though he could not be called a brilliant, archæologist. In addition to his work with

us, he was instrumental with Mr. E. A. Hudd and others, in starting the Clifton Antiquarian Club in 1884, and in their excursions, as well as in their evening discussions, always took an active part. He was not a fluent speaker. I am told that he was an indifferent preacher. His remarks were always given in a jerky manner, as if he was not quite certain about them, and his foreign training was traceable not merely in his manner but also in his speech. He possessed all the charm of the cultivated Italian, and you did not readily recognise the Roman bishop in the pleasant talkative gentleman who sat beside you in the break. It is to be hoped that the County map which he desired to see marked with all the places where any Roman remains had been discovered, will soon be an accomplished fact. One example he set us which it would be well if we imitated in our yearly gatherings. He always came to learn something. It was no mere pic-nic for him. He attended all the evening meetings, listened to all the papers, and helped in all the discussions, and if our Society is to keep the high and honoured position which the learning and fame of its former members have justly gained for it, we must be careful in the future to follow Bishop Clifford's example. The work is not nearly accomplished. Much lies in our way to justify our existence and to train our junior members.

## Charles James Turner.

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SINCE our last issue the Society has sustained a severe loss in the lamented death of Mr. C. J. Turner, of Pinkhurst, Staplegrove.

Mr. Turner was of the class of landed gentlemen whose position in the country used to be eulogized by "the wisest fool in Christendom," as conferring on them the pleasure of a leisured life without any public responsibilities. He was one of the original members of the Society, his name appearing in the first volume of the *Proceedings* issued in 1850. In 1876 Mr. Turner was chosen Secretary, and from that time to his death, on the 20th February, 1893, the management of the internal affairs of the Society was mostly subject to his supervision and control.

His constant aim was to put the finances of the Society on a sound footing, and many a battle did he sustain with those more enthusiastic members, who contended in vain that a debt was after all a matter of no great importance, compared with a coveted acquisition or a longed for improvement. Mr. Turner held his ground. He organized fancy bazaars and balls to clear off the debt incurred by the Society for the purchase of the old Castle. Little by little he saw the debt decreased, and when he was no longer able to leave his house he received the satisfactory announcement that the last instalment had been liquidated.

He was a constant attendant at the meetings, and on more than one occasion his services received kindly recognition at the hands of his fellow members. It is impossible to close this notice without mention of the names of the two members who were his coadjutors and supporters in his policy—Mr. Surtees and Mr. Octavius Malet. All three have now gone to their rest, leaving behind them memories of good work done unostentatiously, and of quiet, exemplary lives.



## William Blencowe Sparks.

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BY REV. E. L. PENNY, D.D., R.N.

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IT is with the utmost regret that we have to notice, as our sheets are going through the press, the lamentably sudden death, on September 30th, of Mr. William Blencowe Sparks, of Misterton, who has been our Local Secretary for so many years, and to whose careful organization the success of the Society's meeting at Crewkerne, in 1891, was mainly owing: nor will our members easily forget the generous hospitality shewn by him and Mrs. Sparks, at their garden party on that occasion.

He was the elder son of Major Sparks (one of the very few original members of our Society), and was born at Crewkerne in 1842. Owing to the death of his mother in 1844, he and his younger brother, Edward, were henceforth tenderly brought up and cared for by their aunt, Miss Mary Sparks.

He entered on the foundation of the old Grammar School, for which he ever retained warm affection, in 1850; and thence went to Harrow in 1856. He subsequently matriculated at Exeter College, Oxford, on 29th May, 1860; took his B.A. degree in 1863; and proceeded to M.A. 1869.

Following his father's steps, Mr. Sparks took a genuine interest in Archæology, which taste seems to have been hereditary, inasmuch as we find his great-grandfather, Isaac, of Langton Herring, Dorset, amongst the original subscribers to Hutchins' first edition of his history of that county in 1774.

Mr. Sparks not only held several public offices, but also busied himself in promoting every local institution and parochial improvement. Although extremely quiet in manner, and retiring in disposition, he was foremost in encouraging and supporting the local football, cricket and benefit clubs, and it was, perhaps, only when you came to know him well, that you discovered that this unobtrusive English gentleman had all the while, in spite of his reticent and distant demeanour, been endeavouring to find some way of showing and doing you unaware a kindness.

He leaves a widow (Lucy, daughter of Mr. Samuel Sparks, of Langport), a son and daughter. His younger, and only brother, Edward Isaac Sparks, M.D., of C.C.C., Oxon., predeceased him in 1880.