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THE READING OBSERVER, S

MEMORIALS TO READING ABBOTS.

DR. HURRY'S GIFTS UNVEILED BY SIR WILLIAM OSLER.

A ceremony which was both interesting and impressive took place in the Forbury on Monday afternoon, when memorials to the first and last Abbots of Reading—Hugh de Boves and Hugh Cook Faringdon—were unveiled in the Chapter House of the ruined Abbey by Sir William Osler, Bart., M.D., F.R.S., F.R.C.P., Regius Professor of Medicine at the University of Oxford. The two memorials, which are the gifts of Dr. Jamieson B. Hurry, are each carved out of a single slab of blue Forest of Dean stone, measuring six feet by five feet six inches, and represent in bold relief scenes from the lives of the first and last Abbots. Abbot Hugh de Boves is represented as receiving the insignia of his office at the hands of King Henry Beauclerc, the design being based on a rough sketch of a similar event, probably by Matthew, of Paris. King Henry is accompanied by men at arms, while the Abbot is supported by some of his tonsured brethren, who are bearing a reliquary in honour of so auspicious an occasion. This memorial bears the arms of Reading Abbey and also a panel with a boeuf passant, a rebus on the name of Boves. The base of the tablet is inscribed as follows:—"To the memory of Hugh de Boves, first Abbot of Reading (A.D. 1123—1130), afterwards Archbishop of Rouen (1130-1160). 'Amor Plebis. Tremor Potentum, Clarus Avis, Clarus Studii. Recreator Egentum.'" Abbot Hugh Faringdon, with a rope round his neck, stands at the foot of the gallows in the act of addressing the butchers of Reading who have flocked to witness the last scene prior to the dissolution of Reading Abbey. Close by are two monastic brethren doomed to share his cruel fate. The background is filled with a crowd of soldiers and burghers. Upon this memorial are carved two coats of arms, that of Reading Abbey and the personal arms of Hugh Faringdon. The inscription at the foot reads as follows: "To the memory of Hugh Cook Faringdon, last Abbot of Reading (1520-1539), who refused to surrender his Abbey to King Henry VIII., and died on the gallows. 'In Te, Domine, Speravi.'" The people of Reading will remember with gratitude these and former examples of Dr. Hurry's public-spirited munificence and of his interest in the Abbey, more particularly the splendid memorial to Henry I., the founder of the Abbey, which stands in the Forbury Gardens, while there are also his widely read book on the history of the Abbey and the map and chronological table of events connected with it, which have proved objects of interest and instruction to thousands of visitors. Dr. Hurry's object in making these gifts to Reading is set forth in a handbook which he published for the unveiling ceremony, and it may be briefly stated to be an effort "to help us to reconstruct in imagination that architectural chef d'oeuvre whose majestic ruins, in their grey scarred beauty, have weathered the storms of centuries, and to keep alive an ever present consciousness that the good old Burch of Radingia has played a worthy part in the making of England. . . ." and something "to keep in remembrance those good men and true who helped to make our Abbey famous. . . ."

The architectural portions of the memorials were designed by Mr. W. Ravenscroft, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., and the scenes by Mr. W. S. Frith, sculptor, who executed the whole of the work.

At 3.30 the municipal dignitaries, in their robes of office, filed into the great Chapter House, whither they had walked in procession from the Town Hall, headed by the sergeants-at-mace, and accompanied by Dr. J. B. Hurry and Sir William Osler. Those taking part in the procession included Aldermen C. G. Field, J. Milson, G. R. Jackson and F. A. Cox. Councillors Edith Sutton, E. P. Collier, E. Jackson, S. Hayward, W. J. D. Venner, W. Rudland, F. A. Sarjeant, A. G. Harris, Denys Egginton, W. E. Butler, W. E. Collier, P. Connolly, F. J. Lewis, A. W. A. Webb and W. R. Howell, the Town Clerk (Mr. W. S. Clutterback), and the Clerk of the Peace (Mr. A. H. Sherwood). The procession was followed into the Chapter House by a large number of prominent residents in Read-

the Abbey that afternoon. The Mayor was subservient to the Abbot, indeed he was chosen by the Abbot. The burgesses selected three suitable men, and the Abbot exercised the veto. (Laughter.) He referred to the great assemblies that had taken place within those walls, and to pageant with some of which even the great Coronation procession would not compare. Turning to the subject of his motion, he said that not only were they indebted to Dr. Hurry for those memorials, but also for the map and chronological list of events, for an excellent book upon the Abbey, and for a magnificent memorial to Henry I. (Applause.)

Ald. J. Milson (Chairman of the Parks and Pleasure Grounds Committee), who seconded the resolution, said they could appreciate a gentleman who had a hobby and who exercised it for the benefit of the community as Dr. Hurry did. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. C. E. Keyser, as Chairman of the Berks Archaeological Society, was called upon by the Mayor to support the resolution. In the course of his remarks he paid a warm tribute to the efforts of Dr. Hurry to make known the Abbey, which was undoubtedly one of the chief glories of the town. They must agree with Sir William Osler that there probably was a necessity for very drastic action at the time of the dissolution of the Abbey. The Church was assuming a despotic position, and it may have been necessary to reduce its power by the destruction of the monastic influence; but it seemed to him to be an immense pity that the inhabitants of Reading took no steps towards the preservation of what was one of the noblest churches in the land. In conclusion, he said that they were deeply grateful for the manner in which Dr. Hurry had brought out the history of that Abbey, and for his endeavour to stimulate that interest which should be felt in it. (Applause.)

Loud applause marked the carrying of the resolution, which was renewed when Dr. Hurry stepped forward to reply. He said he felt that no thanks were necessary, for to him it was the greatest pleasure in the world to do something for that good old town of Radingia, which he had lived in for so many years and had learned to love so well. He was specially glad to do anything which would interest its inhabitants in its long and glorious history—a history of a thousand years or more of which any town might be proud. Many centuries ago Reading Abbey was noted for its religious character, its learning, its charity to the poor, and its hospitality to pilgrims, and when they thought of the splendid generosity of some of their great citizens to-day, who could doubt that in the years to come Reading would play as great, or even a greater, part in the history of the country as she had played in the past? (Hear, hear.) His pleasure that afternoon was greatly enhanced by the presence of Sir William Osler, whom he heartily thanked, and he was also indebted to Mr. Ravenscroft (the architect), and Mr. Frith (the sculptor), for their generous co-operation in those memorials. (Applause.)

Dr. and Mrs. Hurry were then cheered by the assembly, who afterwards partook of tea and light refreshments in the Forbury Gardens, where the Reading Temperance Band was in attendance.

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Dr. Hurry's letter of June 14th, 1910, offering the memorials to the Corporation, and the resolution of the Council accepting the gift, was read by the TOWN CLERK.

Sir WILLIAM OSLER then unveiled the memorials, amid applause, and said: "Let me offer congratulations to this old town in the possession of a romance that appeals to all lovers of antiquity. In your modern prosperity the outside world may lightly forget the glorious history of foundations, now alas, in ruins, which once made Reading the rival of Glastonbury, St. Albans and Osney. Their noble remains you devoutly preserve, and through the pious inspiration of one of your townsmen, Dr. Hurry, we enshrine to-day the memory of the first and last of the long line of men who for four hundred years ruled the destinies of one of the most famous abbeys of England. You see here in stone symbolised the beginning and the end of a great epoch of a vast movement to the strength of which our wonderful cathedrals and many superb ruins bear enduring testimony. Marvellous, indeed, was the faith that found expression in such works! Small wonder that the thirteenth has been called the greatest of the centuries, since in it the larger number of these magnificent foundations took their rise. Little could the first Hugh, even amid the vicissitudes of a long and stormy life, have dreamt of the tragedy that awaited his splendid home and far-off successor—a tragedy that stirs us to the quick in the pages of the Abbé Gasquet, or in the brief memorial printed for this occasion. But like an earthquake, the upheaval to which this ruin testifies was the outcome of natural causes, though not always easy to trace in the tangled skein of history. We pity the fate of Abbot Hugh Faringdon, and you may call down curses on the head of King Henry, but they were both mere pawns in the great game which man has for ever has to play with the enslavers of his spirit. The one lost a beautiful abbey and his life, the other in losing a reputation saved a nation, and struck off for ever from this land the galling fetters of foreign ecclesiastical domination. Much as we deplore the savagery, the injustice, the brutalities associated with the Reformation, into the other balance must be thrown its two great victories—the appeal to reason, and the birth of the spirit of nationality—precious gifts, worth a costly sacrifice. Still at work, the forces which four centuries ago were relentless enough to wreck this abbey and to butcher its head, have slowly but surely so moulded man anew that he looks on life with new eyes. Even those who regret most acutely the changing of the old order rejoice in a new spirit abroad in the world that has given the individual, whether child, man or woman, a value never before possessed. The recognition of the right to live and to be happy and healthy in this beautiful world is its fruit. But this and much more is the work of the past, of which we are the inheritors, and it is from this past we may draw our keenest inspiration and our surest examples. And the lesson lies not in what a man has believed, but in how he has behaved. Who cares a fig whether Abbot Hugh Faringdon assented or not to the King's supremacy? The lesson for us is in his blameless life and brave death—in them we find what the poet calls "the touch divine of noble natures gone." Consciously or unconsciously, everyone looking on this last scene in which the last abbot stands at the foot of the gallows with a rope round his neck, will in his heart make an obeisance to the man who stuck to his principles even unto death—and in so doing will gain strength for life's daily battle. That we live in a better and happier world is the outcome of the struggle of those of our ancestors who loved the light rather than darkness. To reverence their memory is best inspiration for our work. We need their help, and it is just through such memorials as Dr. Hurry has here erected that their benign influence may touch us. As always, Kipling gets to the marrow of the thing in his splendid poem, "Our fathers of old":—

If it be certain, as Galen says
And sage Hippocrates holds as much—
That those afflicted by doubts and dismays
Are mightily helped by a dead man's touch
Then be good to us stars above!
Then, be good to us, herbs below!
We are afflicted by what we can prove;
We are distracted by what we know—
So—ah, so!

Down from your heaven or up from your mould,
Send us the hearts of our fathers of old!

(Applause.)

Mr. W. B. BLANDY proposed a vote of thanks to Sir William Osler, whom he first of all congratulated upon the honour recently conferred upon him by the King. Dr. Osler was a Canadian by birth, and very well known in this country, for no fewer than ten universities on either side of the Atlantic had shown their appreciation of the great work he had done by conferring upon him their highest diplomas. It was singularly appropriate that those memorials should have been given by one member

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The Ven. Archdeacon DUCAT, in seconding the proposal, said it was particularly fitting that a man so eminent in his profession, a man of such light and leading in the science of medicine as Sir William Osler, should unveil those memorials, because they must remember that that great Abbey was a home of secular learning as well as of spiritual devotion. They had the best of testimony to the fact that Hugh de Boves was not only a man of great piety, but also a man of real learning. Hugh Faringdon, although he was described as "a stubborn n.cnk, utterly without learning," they could never forget was a patron of learning at Oxford and at Reading School. Not only when they thought of the secular side of that Abbey was it fitting that Sir William should be there that day, but also when they thought of the religious side, for the religion of the Abbey was practical. In the old days mercy was ever standing at the gate of the Abbey, welcoming the sick and suffering and diseased, and to-day Sir William Osler represented the learned profession, which more perhaps than any other had inherited the Lord's ministry among men. There were no men of modern life who did more unselfish, self-denying work than did the doctors and physicians. Therefore, whether they thought of the religious or the secular side of the work of the great Abbey, it was most fitting that an eminent representative of the medical profession should unveil those memorials. (Applause.)

The resolution having been carried with acclamation, Sir WILLIAM OSLER suitably replied.

The MAYOR proposed a vote of thanks to Dr. Hurry for the gift of those memorials. In doing so he reminded those present of the many ways in which the town of Reading was indebted to the Abbey, which had a great deal to do with the prosperity and education of the district. The Mayor facetiously continued that if the last Abbot were alive he, the Mayor, would not have dared to enter