

OBITUARY

HENRY MONTAGU BUTLER.

IN the Master of Trinity Cambridge has lost a scholar of a type once more common than it is at present. Dr. Henry Montagu Butler was a product of the palmy days of the Classical Tripos, and maintained throughout his long life the best traditions of that excellent course. To have a wide and thorough knowledge of the Greek and Latin authors of the 'best' periods of Greece and Rome—to understand their language, accept its rules or customs as the climax of excellence, and by close study of them to obtain some skill in imitating the diction of the great masterpieces—that was the ideal. It was an ideal congenial to the Master's own mind; and circumstance most happily placed him at the head of a great school which had for long preserved traditions of good classical teaching. Here he followed the practice, more common in the nineteenth century than to-day, of taking most of the work of his own sixth form. 'Dr. Butler,' one who knew him well writes in the *Journal of Education*, 'was emphatically a great teacher, one of the old order, now disappearing, of headmasters who looked on teaching, rather than the framing of syllabuses and time-tables and new curricula, as their prime business and duty.' He was not what is called an 'educationist,' but he was a much better teacher than many educationists. Naturally, his prime achievement as a form-master was instruction in 'pure scholarship.' Himself an artist in expression (whether in English, Greek, or Latin), all his life long aiming at perfection of language, an enthusiastic student of the most polished period of English oratory, he did his best to encourage something like his own artistry in his pupils. He was an unflinching judge of elegance and grace in composition, but it must always be founded on sound knowledge of grammar and idiom. He himself was devoted to the practice of verse composition in Latin and Greek. Whether in the intervals of his day's work at Harrow, or on a railway journey, or during a walk, he would have some passage in

the original was easy or difficult, the version was always a model of correctness and grace. Most of his compositions were collected and published in 1914 in *Some Leisure Hours of a Long Life*—a volume which contains some extraordinarily clever *tours de force*: for instance, the twenty-two alternative translations of Herrick's *What Needs Complaints?* or the twenty-one versions of *Crossing the Bar*—where each somehow seems to have caught, not only the style, but the mood which one associates with the metre in which it is composed.

Dr. Butler published nothing else relating to the Greek and Latin classics. But if style and finish be worthy objects of education, then he was undoubtedly a great educator. To speak of his striking and attractive personality, and of his varied activities, would be beyond the province of this Review.

WILLIAM WALTER MERRY.

ON March 5 of this year died Dr. William Walter Merry, Rector of Lincoln College, and for nearly thirty years Public Orator in the University of Oxford: a scholar whose name will always be honourably associated with the classical learning of his University. Few in our days have done so much to facilitate and in the best sense to popularise the study of Greek and Latin. He was an editor of unwearying activity. The large edition of the first half of the *Odyssey*, begun by James Riddell of Balliol, and continued by his friend Dr. Merry, is likely to remain for a long time the standard English commentary: the Rector was responsible for three quarters of this volume, and entirely for the shorter or school editions of the whole twenty-four books. Like all his work, these are models of lucid and careful exposition. His editions of Aristophanes (*Acharnians*, *Clouds*, *Frogs*, *Knights*, *Birds*, *Wasps*, *Peace*) have been familiar to many generations of students. Their learning is not, nor is it intended to be, that of an Ellis or a Munro. But they are quite erudite enough, full of sound scholarship, and spiced with congenial humour—'learning put