

OBITUARY NOTICE

Mr. S. M. Edwardes

Mr. Stephen Meredyth Edwardes, C.V.O., C.S.I., Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, died of bronchial pneumonia on 1st January, after a fortnight's illness, at his residence at Felden, near Boxmoor, in his 54th year.

A son of the Rev. Stephen Edwardes, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, he went to Eton as a collegier in 1885, Mr. H. Broadbent being his tutor. Leaving in 1888, he went up to Christ Church, Oxford, and passed the I.C.S. examination of 1894. It was fortunate for the Bombay Presidency that he was allotted to Western India, since it fell to him to amplify and revise the public knowledge of "The Town and Island" to a far greater extent than any contemporary. What Sir James Macnabb Campbell (1846-1903) did for the Presidency as a whole by compiling no fewer than thirty-four volumes of the *Bombay Gazetteer*, Edwardes did for "The Town and Island" in a 1901 Census volume and in the three additional volumes of the *Gazetteer* he prepared between 1906 and 1910. His *Rise of Bombay*, his *Byways of Bombay*, and his *Gazetteer*, gave him an enduring place as an authority who must always be consulted on any point connected with the great city where his best years were passed. In 1904 he was made a special collector under the Bombay Improvement Trust Act.

The intimacy which Edwardes gained with current conditions of life in the Western Capital in this post, coupled with his general qualities of courage, decision, and a saving sense of humour, fully justified Lord Sydenham's choice of him at the beginning of 1910 as Commissioner of Police for the city. It fell to him to make local arrangements for good order on the occasion of the landing in Bombay and short stay there of the King and Queen on their way to the Delhi Coronation Durbar. For this he was made C.V.O. and was created C.S.I. in 1915. He effected various reforms, and his

services are commemorated by a marble bust at the head Police Office. In April, 1916, Lord Willingdon selected him for the Municipal Commissionership of Bombay, but after two years' tenure ill-health compelled his too early retirement.

Looking out for work at home, he was selected for the secretaryship of the Indo-British Association, then being set up under the leadership of Lord Sydenham to oppose the scheme of constitutional reform adumbrated in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report which formed the basis of changes made by the Act of 1919. Feeling ran high at that time, and Edwardes was exposed to a good deal of ungenerous criticism for taking the post by Indian politicians who had known him in Bombay, although the long-established unmuzzling of Indian civilians after retirement had given the advocates of reform some of their most prominent leaders. The attacks upon the former Commissioner of Police were the more pronounced since he had an uncanny knowledge of the frailties and lapses of men, high as well as low, in the Bombay scale. This knowledge, supplemented by study of Indian criminology in general, enabled him to give the public an exceptionally interesting book on *Crime in India* (1925). In 1921 he represented India at the Geneva Conference on Traffic in Women and Children. The Indo-British Association was distrustful of the late Mr. Edwin Montagu, and remained in being during his tenure of the India Office.

But Edwardes's real field was research rather than political controversy. He was a past president of and a constant contributor to the *Proceedings of the Bombay Anthropological Society*. In collaboration with his friend, the late Mr. Lovat Fraser, he wrote a folio volume on the Junagadh State (1907). In 1923 Sir Richard Temple secured his honorary services as joint editor of the monthly *Indian Antiquary*. As recently as last summer he was selected to succeed Miss Ella Sykes as secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, and was devoting himself to the work with characteristic zest.

For the Clarendon Press Edwardes thoroughly revised, in the light of later research, Grant Duff's *History of the Mahrattas*, which was published a century ago. He also revised the fourth edition (1924) of the late Mr. Vincent Smith's *Early History of India*. He was in collaboration with Professor Garrett, of the Government College, Lahore, in a comprehensive study of the Mogul period, and in the pauses of this work brought out in the late autumn the last of his books to appear in his lifetime, *Babur : Diarist and Despot*, a character sketch based on the amazingly modern diaries of the founder of the Mogul Empire in India. Note should also be taken of his memoirs of two great industrialists of Western India—Sir Dinshaw Petit, first baronet, and Sir Ranchhodlal Chhodlal of Ahmedabad—and of the Parsee savant, Kharsedji Rustamji Cama. He married in 1895 Celia, daughter of Mr. Arthur Darker, of Nottingham. There is a grown-up daughter and two sons, one of them not yet at school.

In their appreciation of Edwardes's many-sided character, his colleagues of the Indian Civil Service would perhaps desire to pay a special tribute to his amazing capacity for work. The *Rise of Bombay*, which first appeared as a volume in the Census Report for India of 1901, was written in such scanty leisure as was available during the formidable task of enumerating the inhabitants of the town and island of Bombay. Yet this work is one of the most scholarly of his many valuable contributions to the history of India. It was during the Census that he first contracted the illness which in the end proved fatal. In his later years, Edwardes waged a ceaseless struggle against the increasing burden of ill-health, continuing his literary activities with a never-failing courage and cheerfulness. The news of the end of this well-fought battle will be received by both his friends and the readers of his works with very deep regret.
