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## MEMORIES OF CANON CHRISTOPHER.

BY THE REV. W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS, D.D.

(Continued from *THE CHURCHMAN* of April, p. 197.)

### II. CAMBRIDGE, 1839-44.

THE circumstances of young Christopher's going to Cambridge introduce us to a fine episode in his family life. His school-master had strongly recommended that he should be sent to Cambridge, but it was felt impossible for his father to afford the expense. At this crisis his eldest sister, Margaret, was moved to help her young brother. She was the widow of an officer in the Army, and having no children and possessing a pension sufficient for her own personal needs, she determined to devote herself to the work of earning all the money she could towards her brother's expenses at Cambridge. To attain her object, she became the governess of the twin daughters of Mr. LeBas, then Principal of Haileybury College, which was at that time the East Indian Company's College for training their Civil Servants. As she resided in the Principal's lodge at Haileybury, she was able to devote the whole of her earnings towards her brother Alfred's expenses at Cambridge. An elder brother, stimulated by her example, added some help.

A younger brother, Leonard Raisbeck Christopher, the thirteenth child, the eleventh living one, was sent abroad for an appointment, which, because it did not suit him, he never took up. The sister read to Mr. and Mrs. LeBas extracts from his letters, and this awakening an interest in the youth, Mr. LeBas exerted his influence with one of the directors and obtained for him a Cadetship in the East Indian Company's Army. Thus both brothers owed their positions to the love of their eldest sister.

Alfred Christopher went up to Cambridge in October, 1839, and during his freshman's year was a member of St. John's College. The main reason of the choice of that College seems to have been that the master, Dr. Ralph Tatham (who was also Public Orator of the University), was a relative of his father.

A freshman led Christopher to go with him on a Sunday evening to the rooms of Mr. Carus, Fellow and Dean of Trinity. These

were over the great gate of the College and were famous as having been occupied by Sir Isaac Newton when he was a Fellow of the College. Mr. Carus was Vicar of Trinity, Charles Simeon's Church, and also evening Lecturer to a parochial congregation. Christopher thus often heard Carus twice a day in St. Mary's, the University Church, besides attending the interesting gathering of undergraduates in his rooms at Trinity. There were only twenty or thirty men when Christopher first went. The first half hour was taken up with tea and talk, and then Carus gave an address. After a time the number of undergraduates attending increased, and as the numbers rose to between one and two hundred, the College allowed Mr. Carus to build a large room behind the Chapel, and between one and two hundred University men were generally present.

In the examination of St. John's at the end of Christopher's first year, Classics told heavily, and he was only fifteenth in the first class, which was a very large one. John Adams, afterwards the eminent astronomer, was first. He must have gained that position by his mathematics. He was the Senior Wrangler of Christopher's year in January, 1843. Discouraged by his position at that first examination, Christopher migrated to Jesus College, of which Dr. French was Master. There was only one examination in the year at Jesus College, not two, as at St. John's, and instead of many competitors, there was only one, whose name was Röhrs. Christopher was second and gained a scholarship at the first examination in 1841. He afterwards wished he had not been discouraged by his position in his first examination, for he felt he lost much by leaving St. John's, both in the way of preparation for the Mathematical Tripos and also in more personal associations. This experience led him from time to time to recommend undergraduates to keep to the College which they first joined and to do their best therein, to choose with decision Christian men as their associates and deliberately to avoid as much as possible needlessly coming under the influence of those who were not likely to help them to live aright. His removal from St. John's seems also to have involved giving up attendance at Mr. Carus' Sunday evening meetings, because he did not continue in the society of decided Christian men. Canon Christopher's own words on this point are very characteristic of the man he became:—

I have reason to humble myself before God on account of my undergraduate life at Cambridge. How much happier and how much more useful I might have been if I had yielded myself to God at the beginning of my course, and had kept steadfastly to the use of those means of grace to which I was introduced in my first term. The life of a decidedly Christian undergraduate, who will, as a duty, use to the utmost the advantages of education which the University affords to him, and will avail himself of the Christian fellowship which is open to him, may be one of the happiest lives which a young man can live.

Christopher took his degree in January, 1843, as nineteenth Wrangler. He always said it was quite as good a degree as he deserved, but he felt that if he had remained at St. John's and had worked steadily on there, using its great advantages to the utmost, he might have done much better. But, as we shall see, even this moderate success (as he used to regard it) led to his being appointed in 1844 Principal of the Martinière, Calcutta, and, thereby, to all that followed.

His early love of cricket naturally followed him to Cambridge, though he afterwards felt that he spent much more time than he ought to have done in the cricket field during the May term, for his reading suffered and, therefore, his degree. But in spite of this, he was always insistent that a man's reading need not suffer through sports, granted a resolute will. He used to illustrate this from the case of Denman (afterwards Lord Justice Denman), who at that time was "stroke" of the First Trinity boat and the Senior Classic of his year. Cricket matches then began after breakfast, and thus time was employed at the wickets or about them which usually would have been spent in work. However, it was through the practice in that field that Christopher was chosen to be one of the University Eleven to play against Oxford in 1843.

It was decided for that year the Inter-University cricket match should be played at Oxford instead of at Lord's. As yet there was no railway between Oxford and Cambridge, and only one stage coach in the day. The Oxford men generously allowed Christopher to play in the match, although he had taken his degree in the preceding January. The Cowley March ground was wet, so the match was played on Bullingdon Hill, between two and three miles from Oxford. It was a very windy day and the bails could hardly be kept on. Christopher, with the reputation of being "a steady bat," was sent in first with Trevelyan of Caius. Before the first wicket fell, which was Christopher's, they had been an hour together.

One of the bowlers named Moberly, a son of Bishop Moberly of Salisbury, was very formidable and the Cambridge pair were obliged to play very cautiously. Only fifty runs were obtained in the first hour, of which Christopher hit eighteen, but one of his leg hits was into a field and he scored six for a "lost ball." This was a great encouragement in his rather slow innings. The Canon would frankly say that it would be easy for a rapid scorer to laugh at him as a great "muff" for having remained in an hour and only scored eighteen! But then, as the Canon used to add, with a smile, "Such a player never had to face Moberly"! And, after all, that first hour had something to do with the winning of the match, for it seemed to take the confidence out of the Oxford bowlers. At any rate, Cambridge won by over fifty runs. In his characteristic way, Canon Christopher used to comment on this match and its sequel, remarking how little he could have anticipated that, in the Providence of God, he should be for forty-six years Rector of a Church in that very city. But in spite of his nearly fifty years in Oxford, the Canon was always a Cambridge man, and the victories of his old University in the cricket field or on the river always delighted the old athlete's heart, while those of Oxford had a precisely contrary effect! I recall his momentarily solemn face whenever I went into his study with the news of Oxford's success in the Boat Race.

Christopher had some undergraduates as private pupils during the two terms after taking his degree, and he formed a reading party of undergraduates to read with him at Beaumaris in Anglesey for three months of the long vacation.

In 1844 he became engaged to his cousin, Maria F. Christopher. There was talk of a five years' engagement, as he had no prospect of being able to provide for a wife. Happily, however, the way soon opened both to a position and to marriage.

Sir Edward Ryan, who had been Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Calcutta (and with whom had been associated as a Puisne Judge, Sir Henry Wilmot Seton, an uncle of Miss Christopher), had been entrusted with the selection of a Principal for La Martinière, Calcutta. He visited Mr. LeBas, the Principal of Haileybury College, where, at that time, the young men who had obtained nominations to the Indian Civil Service were trained. He inquired of Professor Heaviside (afterwards Canon), Professor of Mathe-

matics in the College, if he knew of a suitable man to be the Head of La Martinière. As Professor Heaviside knew Christopher, and in the course of an examination had been pleased by an original solution of a problem, he recommended him to Sir Edward Ryan. The important question at once arose whether he knew enough Classics for the post, and Sir Edward Ryan proposed that in a fortnight's time Christopher should visit Dr. Mill, formerly Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta, to be examined in Classics. Christopher said he never worked so hard any fortnight in his life as he did at a Greek play (the *Andromache* of *Euripides*) and the *Odes* of *Horace*, which he proposed to offer for examination, not having looked at them for two years. Dr. Mill was evidently satisfied, for he gave a favourable report, and the result was an appointment, before Christopher was twenty-four, to take charge of this important and interesting Institution. Canon Christopher always associated this appointment with his sister Margaret and her help in sending him to Cambridge. Professor Heaviside, like other Professors at Haileybury College and their wives, was interested in the fact that his sister had devoted herself for years to the work of a governess solely in order that her brother might go to Cambridge. It was therefore not unnatural that Professor Heaviside should mention Christopher to Sir Edward Ryan as a suitable man for the post he was seeking to fill.

Miss Christopher's mother and aunt naturally thought that he had better go out and try the appointment for a year and then, if he found it all that was desirable, that his intended bride should follow him. But at this the young lady spoke out with a decision for which Canon Christopher was ever grateful to her, and which astonished those who had only known her as a gentle and submissive, unselfish daughter. She said, "If I go out at all, I must go with him, as I cannot follow him not knowing whether I shall find him alive when I land." This decided the matter. Beyond all question, she acted wisely, for no one could conceive what a disadvantage it would have been to him to have begun his arduous and difficult work at La Martinière without the help of a wife.

W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS.

(To be continued.)