

IN MEMORIAM  
CONINGSBY DISRAELI

Following closely upon the loss of the President, which had to be recorded in the last number of the Records, the Society suffered a still more direct blow in losing its Chairman of Council,—Major Coningsby Disraeli, T.D., D.L.

“ More direct ” because of his close and continuous interest in the activities and success of the Society for very many years. As nephew and heir of the greatest English statesman of modern times, Coningsby Disraeli had to occupy the somewhat difficult position which attends the successor of genius of a high order.

He used the influence of the name he bore and the prestige attaching to Hughenden to achieve a position in the County of an unusual kind. He had a great sense of duty, and never spared himself in its performance, so that whether it was County Council business, the local bench, or educational administration,—he flung himself into it with equal ardour.

The Archaeological Society furnished him with another field of activity, on which he entered with the same enthusiasm. The grandson of Isaac Disraeli, although not a professed antiquary or with any claim to close research, had been educated at Charter House and New College, Oxford, and was well qualified to be a keen and penetrating critic of poor workmanship in both literature and art.

His interest in architecture was real and discerning, and nothing pleased him more than to work upon the plans of any building which he owned, or with which he was officially concerned. Without being a modern Earl of Burlington he could certainly exercise structural imagination; improvements to the Manor House

itself, work upon the 16th century building at Hughenden which was for some time almshouses, but converted by him to a parochial hall, the re-building of Wycombe Grammar School, and even the recent addition to our Society's premises when the Muniment Room was made,—all testify in different ways to his interest in “lay-out,” and taste in design.

The Society's work in the County appealed strongly to him, and in return he pleaded its cause with good effect by explaining its educational worth to the County Council. He interested himself in every detail of our administration, and for many years there was never an annual excursion planned, or a number of the *Records* published, without having been first discussed in his smoking-room or on the terrace at Hughenden. The improved *format* of the *Records* was the direct result of the Chairman's firmness opposed to the editor's inferior taste and adherence to tradition.

But as an example which illustrates the depth of his interest in the Society's concerns to the last the full story of the recently acquired Phillips MSS may be told. When the sale catalogue revealed the rich packet of early and important deeds relating to Bucks, the necessity for acquiring some at least for the Muniment Room was apparent. It fell to the lot of the present writer to appeal to the County for funds for this purpose, but before doing so he asked the Chairman by letter to guarantee whatever was needed to bring this sum to £50. This was at a time when Disraeli was beginning the illness which unhappily proved to be his last, but he immediately telephoned acquiescence and encouragement. When he was informed that the sum had been obtained and that his guarantee no longer bound him, his answer (the last of innumerable notes about the Society's welfare), was to send a cheque for the full amount of the contingency which had not in fact occurred. In this way items 1 to

9 of the list published in the last number of the *Records* form a direct memorial of his unflagging interest in County history.

Although Major Disraeli was not an old man the position he had won in the county was such that the mention of his name opened any door in the Society's interest. This is not the occasion for the expression of personal feeling, but the writer of the present note cannot conclude without acknowledging his gratitude for Coningsby Disraeli's unfailing friendship.

G.E.