

## Chapter XXI

1914 - 1916

### Acqui : War : Allan Bank : Edith's Death

Edith had been suffering from lameness for some time and as her condition got steadily worse, it was felt that a visit to Acqui in northern Italy, which from Roman times was famous for its warm sulphur springs, might prove beneficial. Eleanor Simpson accompanied them and as Edith rested, she and Hardwicke explored the surrounding countryside, where they learnt of the tradition that King Edward II had not been murdered in Berkeley Castle and buried at Gloucester, but had escaped to Melazzo and lived there for two and a half years. Hardwicke then spent many happy hours in researching the story.

When Edith's treatment was ended they went to the Dolomites, where they stayed high on the Pordoi Jock. The place was draped in black crêpe flags and they discovered that the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife had been assassinated at Sarajevo.

While the ladies rested, Hardwicke went on to Schwaz, above Innsbruck, to research the family names he had found in the Crosthwaite Church Registers, of German miners who had come to Keswick in 1567-1568, at the request of Queen Elizabeth I, to teach their mining techniques, especially their smelting processes, which were considered to be better than those being used in England at that time.<sup>1</sup> In October, Hardwicke gave a lecture about the German miners in Keswick. He said that he had been rather disappointed in his research at Schwaz, in that, he had not found any evidence of the names mentioned in the Crosthwaite registers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rawnsley, H.D., Past and Present at the English Lakes. Maclehose, Glasgow, 1916, contains an account of this visit

<sup>2</sup>*Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*, the 31 October 1914

Hardwicke returned to England and the ladies followed more slowly because of Edith's health. They were all safely home before war was declared on the 4 August 1914. When the war broke out, Canon Rawnsley held services of Intercession, to which he invited the ministers and congregations of all the churches. By the middle of August, the Rawnsleys' son, Noel, put himself and his motor car at the disposal of the War Office. He was detailed to accompany Sir Alfred Keogh and his staff, together with ten doctors, ten dressers and twenty nurses to Belgium, for the purpose of organizing the Red Cross hospital. For some time Noel served with the Red Cross then later with the Signal Corps of the Royal Engineers. His father spoke at recruiting meetings, urging young men to answer the call to arms in the patriotic spirit which had made the nation great. In June, 1916, he continued the theme when he preached at Uppingham, at the School Founders' Day Sermon.<sup>1</sup> Of the one thousand seven hundred and sixty old boys of the school who had gone to the front, at the time of the sermon, one hundred and twenty seven had been killed and two hundred and thirty wounded or taken prisoner.<sup>2</sup> As the casualty lists grew he, like many of his generation, modified his views with the realization of the horror and futility of war. Inevitably much of Canon Rawnsley's time during the war years, was spent in visiting and comforting those who received the dreaded news that loved ones had been killed. This was no mere conventional duty for him, as he shared the grief of his parishioners with deep feeling and practical help. In 1915 he published his Poems of the European War. Many verses were written for the bereaved privately and never published.

Other activities which claimed his attention during these years ranged from the best way of making sand bags, the treatment of peat to make it acceptable as an alternative fuel for industrial purposes, collecting money to provide comforts for the troops and to buy a motor ambulance for the Carlisle hospitals. In addition, it was decided to provide, in Keswick, some housing for Belgian

<sup>1</sup>Cumbria R.O. WDX 402

<sup>2</sup>Murphy, Graham, Founders of the National Trust. Christopher Helm, London, 1987, p128

refugees. £1,000 was collected in five days for the Prince of Wales' Fund. A house was found and cleaned by volunteers who furnished it with gifts from local people. Mr. D.N. Pape offered his Temperance Hotel to provide further accommodation, free of rent for the duration of the war. All was ready, after a lot of hard work, to welcome the expected refugees by the beginning of November, but there was a sense of anticlimax at their slow arrival, until the middle of December when the maximum number they could manage, arrived.<sup>1</sup>

Just before the war, with Edith's poor health, she and Hardwicke had begun to think that they ought to retire from Crosthwaite, but with the outbreak of hostilities they felt that they must stay and support the people of Keswick. Nevertheless, they thought that they could look for a house for their retirement. Fortunately, Allan Bank, a house at Grasmere in a lovely situation, became available, which was bought in August 1915. In addition to being attracted by the position of the house, Hardwicke was delighted with its literary connections. Wordsworth had lived there from 1808 to 1811, when he composed most of "The Excursion". Other poets and their families visited constantly, especially Coleridge and De Quincey, which involved a great deal of extra work for Wordsworth's wife and sister, particularly as every chimney in the house smoked. In spite of this, Dorothy loved it and described it as, " ... sweeter than Paradise itself."<sup>2</sup> The house which had been built in 1805, was described by Wordsworth, " ... as a temple of abomination." Dr. Arnold from Rugby had stayed there with his large family in 1833. Edith and Hardwicke enjoyed getting it ready for their retirement, surrounded as they were by so many Grasmere friends. It was a respite from their arduous duties.

In spite of the war, ordinary life in the parish continued. One of Hardwicke's three curates went with the Territorials to India. The church tower needed repair and the bells needed to be re-hung. One peal needed to be recast. This was seen to by Hardwicke who

<sup>1</sup>Cumberland and Westmorland Herald, the 7, the 14 November and the 12 December 1914

<sup>2</sup>Letter to Lady Beaumont, 1810

went to the foundry in London to supervise the work and paid the account himself. Meanwhile, Mr. Eeles, the archaeologist who had advised on the repairs, discovered that the small bell, which Hardwicke had given to the parish room, after saving it from Loweswater Church, was an excellent example of fourteenth century work. As it was considered to be too valuable to be left hanging outside, it was placed in the church and a new one was given by Edith and Hardwicke, engraved with the words, "Let all war cease and ring in peace. H.D.R. and E.R. 1915".

In 1915, they gave a house and farm in Borrowdale, to Keswick School, in order to provide a scholarship, to one of the universities. The gift was to express gratitude to all the men of Keswick and the surrounding district who had gone to war.

Together in 1916 they even mounted a campaign against the growing menace of litter, caused by selfish and thoughtless picnickers, who desecrated beautiful places by leaving their rubbish behind. Their appeal was circulated by the County Education Authority to all schools. This was taken up by *The Spectator*, *Observer* and other national newspapers.

During his Carlisle residences in these years, Hardwicke became aware that a great factory town called Gretna was being built at incredible speed. He immediately went to discuss this with the architect, as ultimately, permanent houses would be built. It was the siting of these which was of great concern to Hardwicke. Incredibly, he got the architect to agree that, "... the axis line of the town was so placed that the Skiddaw group would form the terminal feature of the main high street."<sup>1</sup> In fine, clear weather, this meant that there would be a fine view of these mountains. Close to Gretna was the Lochmaben stone, once part of a stone circle. Hardwicke was afraid that it might be damaged or even disappear altogether in the building operations. Due to his campaign the Board of Agriculture for Scotland bought the land on which it stood, which ensured its protection.

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<sup>1</sup>Rawnsley, E.F., *Canon Rawnsley*, Glasgow, 1923, p237

Although for three years, Edith had suffered increasing pain which her doctors were unable to alleviate, she endeavoured to carry on with her usual interests and activities, running the household and attending Cathedral services, as they were again resident in Carlisle and even packing parcels for a prisoner of war she had adopted. Eleanor Simpson spent a great deal of time with her during this period. Before returning home to Grasmere, she promised to return to Carlisle in order to assist in the move back to Keswick, at the end of the year. To make matters worse, Hardwicke was confined to bed with a severe attack of influenza. On Christmas Day, 1916, Edith attended two Cathedral services, before becoming very ill. She grew worse and died on the last day of the year.

Hardwicke was devastated. For thirty eight years, she had been his devoted wife who quietly saw to all the details of their every day life, putting her own undoubted skills and talents into second place, to ensure that the way was clear for Hardwicke to pursue his many activities. It was largely due to Edith, that he was able to achieve so much.

He was too ill to be present at either the Memorial service in the Cathedral or the Funeral service at Crosthwaite, which took place on a stormy January day. Eight of her women friends were the pall bearers. The Bishop of Barrow conducted the service, in the presence of an overwhelmingly large congregation with past and present curates, together with many clergy in attendance, bearing testimony to the respect and affection in which she was held.

The service was carried out according to her wishes, particularly in the ringing of the bells. It was the custom for them to be muffled at funerals, but Edith desired that they should ring out joyfully, as a sign that life had triumphed over death. Although

unable to be present, Hardwicke wrote a poem which was printed on the service paper. Later he had a cross of Runic design placed to mark her grave, with the inscription:-

"Edith Rawnsley, a humble follower of Christ, a lover of the good, the beautiful, the true, entered into the fuller life, the 31 December 1916."