

LORD REAY

1839-1921

DONALD JAMES MACKAY, eleventh BARON REAY and head of the Clan Mackay, was born in Holland in November 1839. His father was a Minister of State in the Netherlands, where the family had been settled since the middle of the eighteenth century, and Vice-President of the Privy Council. He was educated at the University of Leyden, and graduated there on May 31, 1861, with a thesis, which he published, 'On the Maintenance of European power and Reformation of the Administration of Justice in Java and its dependencies under the government of the Governor-General H. W. Daendels'.

His active career began with a clerkship at the Dutch Colonial Office, but before long he entered the Legislature, taking his seat with the Party of the Left, for he was—unlike his father and the greater part of the Dutch aristocracy—a Liberal in politics. Young though he was, he soon acquired influence in the Assembly. Together with a friend who entered Parliament at the same time, Mr. S. van Houten—in later years a statesman of high distinction—he was the means of carrying through the first Act passed in Holland regarding Child Labour. Shortly after quitting the University he visited England, and soon fell into the habit of coming over frequently. In the end of 1862 he was in Oxford, where I met him for the first time. He was brought there by two English friends, Fellows of Merton College—C. S. Roundell and G. C. Brodrick; and he impressed those who met him at that time by the ardour of his intellectual curiosity. He was particularly eager to know all we could tell him about the University and the Colleges, and their relation to the public life of England. It seemed to us that education was even then his paramount interest. His ingenuous mind, his simple tastes, his earnestness in the pursuit of truth, and the elevation of his character, won respect for him from all who came to know him in England; and his interests from that time on began to be fully as much in England as in his native Holland, for he saw that the movements in the larger country were on a grander scale, and were destined to exert a much more powerful influence on the future of mankind. Finally in 1875 he decided to leave the Netherlands and settle in England. He did not, however, lose his interest

in Holland, regularly spending a part of every year there. In 1877 he was naturalized by statute as a British subject, and the next year he succeeded to the title. Unfortunately, the Scottish title was not accompanied by Scottish estates, for these had long before passed away from the family. He was, however, titular head of the Clan Mackay whose principal seat was at Strathnaver, in what used to be called the Reay country, the central and western part of Sutherlandshire. It was one of the great Clans of the north, and is supposed by some to have been the Clan Kayis which fought the famous battle on the North Inch of Perth against Clan Chattan, described by Walter Scott in *The Fair Maid of Perth*. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries members of the family won fame in war, the best remembered being the General, a favourite of William of Orange, who commanded the royal army against Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, at the battle of Killiecrankie.

In 1881 a United Kingdom Peerage was conferred upon Lord Reay by the advice of Mr. Gladstone, and he thus obtained a seat in the House of Lords, where he was a diligent attendant and occasional speaker till the failure of his health in 1916. In 1885 he was appointed Governor of Bombay, and held that post till 1890, administering its important duties in a singularly conscientious and enlightened spirit. His courage was put to a severe test when in 1888 grave suspicions arose regarding the character and conduct of a prominent member of the Civil Service who had many personal friends among influential members of that Service. The Governor, convinced that the case needed judicial investigation, directed proceedings to be taken. He was assailed by a storm of misrepresentation and invective, but he held firmly to his purpose. The result fully justified his action, and had a beneficial effect in showing that neither high office, nor the possession of widespread personal influence, could save a man from the penalty due to his malpractices. Lord Reay exerted himself in the promotion of education in his Presidency, and he always showed—aided in this by Lady Reay—a warm interest in the native population, taking great pains to maintain close relations with the leading men—Parsees, Hindus, and Moslems. He enjoyed their confidence and respect in a quite exceptional degree.

On his return to England he accepted the Presidency of the Royal Asiatic Society, and bore thereafter a chief part in directing its policy. In 1894 he became Under Secretary for India in Mr. Gladstone's last Ministry, and retained that post till the Conservative Government came into office in the following year.

Coming to the India Office with a first-hand knowledge of India, he was able to renew his interest in matters which had been the subject of his special care in Bombay, particularly Education, including its technical and industrial aspects. He welcomed many Indian scholars and eminent men with whom he had been intimate in India—especially those Indian princes who had been connected with the Bombay Presidency. Among the questions in which he took an active part were the Indian cotton duties, internal railway development, and the efforts of the Indian Government to attract private enterprise to the construction of branches and feeder lines to the main railway systems. He was also much occupied with India's foreign relations and the negotiation of an agreement with Russia in March 1895, which defined the northern boundary of Afghanistan. In the question of frontier policy which arose from the attack of a petty frontier chief on the fort of Chitral held by Dr.—afterwards Sir George—Robertson, then political agent in Gilgit, he took the view that it was better not to retain Chitral. Lord Rosebery's Government decided in that sense, thinking it better to limit British responsibilities in a region so difficult of access; but the decision was reversed when Lord Salisbury came into office in July 1895.

In 1897 he was elected Chairman of the London School Board, and discharged the duties of that laborious office with so much acceptance that he was re-elected to it from time to time until the School Board itself, extinguished by a Statute, expired in 1904. In 1901, when the British Academy was founded by Royal Charter, he was unanimously elected to be its first President, and re-elected in each succeeding year till 1907, having thus held office longer than any of his successors. The principal reasons which suggested the choice of one who had not devoted his energies mainly to learning and literary production were threefold. He had an unusually wide intellectual outlook, and had shown his interest in many branches of knowledge. He had an exceptionally large acquaintance with the European Commonwealth of letters, being equally at home in Germany, France, and Belgium, as well as in his native Holland, and accustomed to follow the progress of inquiry and the movements of thought in all these countries. Perhaps no one in England since the death of Lord Acton (who had died very shortly before the establishment of the Academy which he had done so much to create) was so cosmopolitan in both the above senses, so able to keep the Academy in touch with continental scholars, as was Lord Reay. To these qualifications was added the reputation he had acquired for

a high sense of public duty, and a singular breadth and impartiality of view. His action in the Chair for six years more than justified the choice of the Fellows, and the Academy owes more than can be told to his assiduity, judgement, tact, and practical good sense. It was with great regret that his wish to retire was conceded by the Fellows. Constantly re-elected to the Council, he attended its meetings, helping it by his advice until his death, even when, being unable to walk, he had to be carried to the Meetings in a chair.

While thus serving Elementary Education in the School Board on the one hand and Learning in the British Academy on the other, his keen interest in University Education drew him into a third field of activity.

The Provost of University College sends the following observations on Lord Reay's association with University College, and the University of London generally :

'Lord Reay's active interest in questions of University organization in London began in 1881, when he was elected a member of the Council of University College.

He threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of the Council, and soon became deeply interested in the problem of the re-organization of the University of London, which was then, as he felt, a University in name only.

From 1885 to 1890, he was away in India. During this time he never lost touch with the College or the University question. He was re-elected to the Council in 1891, of which he became Vice-President in 1892, and President in 1897.

He served on the Cooper Commission, the Report of which was the basis of the Act of Parliament, passed in 1898, under which the then existing University was completely reconstructed on a new basis and with enlarged powers.

He was one of the first to realize that the constitution, under which the University began work in 1909, must remain lacking in reality until and unless the University could obtain direct control over some of the more important of the London Colleges, which had been grouped together under the new constitution as "Schools of the University".

It was this conviction that made him advocate the incorporation of University College in the University. He realized that it was a step involving great risk to the College, but he was convinced that some such step was necessary for the promotion of a well-ordered University in London.

It was, therefore, under his leadership, and with the confidence

begotten by his courage in the movement, that after prolonged negotiations University College surrendered its autonomy and became incorporated in the University of London on January 1, 1907. The ultimate government of the College was thus placed in the hands of the Senate of the University.

For the purposes of detailed administration, the Senate appointed the University College Committee. Lord Reay accepted the Chairmanship of the Committee, and held it until the time of his death in 1921. He was thus able to pilot the College and the University through the years of transition. The difficulties were great, but by his tact, by the patient study of the problems with which the University was confronted, he was enabled to give effect to a large extent to the aims that he had in mind in promoting the great change. He welcomed as a sure proof of the wisdom of this step the decision of King's College to follow suit.

He was a far-seeing administrator, but he was never weary, both by example and by precept, of making clear that administration is the hand-maid of education.

"If University Education is to mean anything, it must be based upon the freedom and, consequently, the responsibility, of the Teacher." There was nothing in which he had less confidence than the wholesale examination system, in which the teacher had no voice.

He realized that if London was to have a University organization on a scale and in accordance with the greatness of London as the capital of this country, and as the capital of the Empire, there must be re-arrangement of studies; there must be some sacrifice of Departments by the older Colleges.

As Chairman of the Departmental Committee, whose report led to the foundation of the School of Oriental Studies, he indicated his view as to how these things should be done. He regretted deeply that the Building for the new School of Oriental Studies was so far removed from other University institutions. He believed profoundly in grouping the newer University Institutions as far as possible in one quarter.

When the time comes for writing the history of the University movement between 1881 and 1921, there will be no name to which greater tribute should be paid.

In his last letter to the College accepting the gift of his portrait, he wrote: "Among the recollections of my long life, my connexion with the College occupies a foremost place."

In 1916 he had the misfortune to suffer a serious accident which prevented him from ever thereafter being able to walk. Before he

had recovered from its immediate effects a trying malady attacked him, from which he suffered almost continually for the rest of his life. While lying helpless, his wife, to whom he was tenderly attached, died after a short illness, and he was left a lonely invalid. Most men would have collapsed at once under three such strokes falling on him one after the other, when he had passed his seventy-fifth year. But he had an unconquerable spirit, and was supported by his lively interest in the progress of the world, by the resources of his own mind, by the sympathy which his numerous friends showed for him, testified in their frequent visits, and above all by his simple and earnest piety. No complaint ever escaped his lips; all that he suffered was borne with a quiet resignation. Fortunately neither his hearing nor his sight was affected, so he was not cut off from the many friends who came to bring him their news and profit by his comments thereon. Neither was his mental force abated. His clear insight and sound judgement remained what they had been, perhaps even further matured by his long experience of affairs and knowledge of men. He died in August 1921, after a few days illness, and painlessly, at Carolside in Berwickshire, where he often spent the autumn.

His wide and ardent intellectual curiosity made him always more disposed to learn than to produce, and (as with Lord Acton) the love of knowledge stood in the way of literary work; a conscientious anxiety to discharge his obligations to every kind of practical work he undertook, left him comparatively little leisure for study. He had, however, found time to acquire a thorough mastery of international law, and brought it to bear effectively at the meetings of the Institut du Droit International, which he regularly attended till his health failed.

Though he came of a warlike stock, no one was a more devoted advocate of peace between nations. His one consolation for the miseries of the Great War was the hope that these very miseries might drive the powers of the world to more persistent efforts to prevent the recurrence of such a calamity.

The deepest motives that guided his action were an unfailing sense of duty, and a deep-seated love of truth. For himself he had little or no ambition, regarding public office only as a means of promoting good causes. In everything that he did he was thorough, sparing no pains to get at the bottom of a question, and to form that fair estimate of men's characters and capacities, which is one of the most useful things, and one of the most difficult to attain, when enterprises have to be carried through to success.

Stately and gentle in his courtesy, considerate of others, reserved in most things, but opening his heart to those on whose sympathy he counted, he was the most faithful of friends. His serious air and the gravity of his manner gave the impression of austerity, but although he was strict in his adherence to moral principles, he was lenient in his judgements of individual men, and never said an unkindly word. Though he seldom made jokes, he had plenty of quiet humour, as those knew who heard him tell a story, or saw his enjoyment of the stories his friends brought him. Needless to say that he was never a partisan. Holding firmly to his own political and religious opinions, he never let them make any difference to his private friendships. His mind was, indeed, too large to be affected by any but high feelings and motives. Elevation and uprightness in word and deed were the notes of his character. No one who went to see him in his last years, sitting patiently in his chair, bearing with serene composure and undiminished sweetness of temper the loss of all those things which to most men make life worth having, could fail to find in him a model of the spirit in which philosophy and religion tell the wise man to accept whatever is sent. To his friends who saw him thus he will remain an unforgettable example of dignified strength and nobility of soul.

BRYCE.

[This draft is printed as left unfinished at Lord Bryce's death.]