

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF WILLIAM EVERARD,
ARCHITECT AND SURVEYOR, LIVERPOOL,

1723—1792.

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(READ MARCH 25TH, 1869.)

WHEN I last had the honour to address the Society, it was to give a biographical sketch of the brief and brilliant career of one whose genius commanded admiration, and whose early death elicited universal sympathy and regret. But on this occasion I shall not have to interest your feelings and excite your sorrow by setting before you,—as in the case of Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, the architect of St. George's Hall,—the sad spectacle of a strong mind united to a frail body; the fire of genius burning itself out for want of physical stamina to maintain it. I treat now of the unostentatious yet useful career of one who, in the course of it, conferred on Liverpool considerable benefits; and who, in the enjoyment of that great blessing, "*mens sana in corpore sano*," passed an active and prosperous existence, extending nearly to the allotted number of the days of the years of a man's life,—the well-known "threescore years and ten," rarely prolonged by reason of strength to fourscore years,—and died in the possession of affluence and reputation, of all that should accompany old age, "honor and love, obedience, troops of friends."

And, thank Heaven, in every age, and in every civilized country, there are hundreds, nay thousands of such, who pursuing the noiseless tenor of their way, doing their duty well and manfully in that station of life to which it has pleased Heaven to call them, live honoured and die lamented.

This was the case with Mr. Everard, yet his name is, I believe, totally unknown to this generation (except to his direct descendants); and the question naturally arises,—indeed I put it to myself, and underwent a severe mental cross-examination with regard to it—whether, by a paper read before the Historic Society, the attempt to record his merits, and rescue his name from that oblivion which is the lot of the vast majority of the human race, would not appear presumptuous, and prove somewhat uninteresting;—nay, would not be liable to the satire of Cowper, written on seeing some names of little note recorded in the *Biographia Britannica*:—

“ Oh ! fond attempt to give a deathless lot
 To names ignoble, born to be forgot ;
 In vain, recorded in historic page,
 They court the notice of a future age :
 Those twinkling tiny lustres of the land
 Drop one by one from Fame’s neglecting hand ;
 Lethæan gulfs receive them as they fall,
 And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.
 So when a child, as playful children use,
 Has burnt to tinder a stale last year’s news,
 The flame extinct, he views the roving fire ;
 There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,
 There goes the parson, oh illustrious spark !
 And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk.”

Accidental circumstances, however, have made me acquainted with some facts and records of the life of Mr. Everard, and his connexion with Liverpool, for many years of the last century, which I thought might not be altogether uninteresting to the members of the society; and stimulated by this wish and hope, I have ventured to make them the subject of a paper.

A few months ago, calling one morning at the Liverpool Library, my friend Mr. Perris said—“ I think, Mr. President, “ you will be interested in looking at this” (handing me a card, handsome in design and venerable in appearance) “ which “ is the business card of a gentleman of your profession, who

“ must have practised in Liverpool, judging from the antique appearance of the card, many years ago.” On shewing it to a scientific friend of mine, and asking him if he had ever heard the name, he exclaimed :—“ Yes ; I had the honour and happiness to marry his great-grand-daughter. He was a man of great and varied scientific attainments, and was looked up to and consulted—as appears from his papers and correspondence, quantities of which I have in my possession—particularly in his latter years, on many important matters. He was, in fact, the originator of the Liverpool Library, and the first books purchased for it were kept in a corner cupboard in his parlour. I have the cupboard now, and shall be most happy to show it to you, together with his portrait, both in oil and a miniature, and those of his father, mother, and daughters, and many things that belonged to him, and have been kept in the family above a hundred years.” Accordingly, I availed myself of this friendly invitation, and spent a pleasant evening looking over the portraits, china, and other curious things belonging to the subject of this paper, and finished the evening by drinking to his memory out of this venerable jug, 224 years of age, bearing the date of 1645, just when the great civil war broke out between Charles I and his parliament.

Mr. Storey (whose acquaintance I had the good fortune to make a few years since, when I was acting as architect, and he as engineer, for the Earl of Castlestuart in Ireland) married one of the three Miss Lords, and it is to the care of these ladies and the respect they cherish for the memory of their ancestors, and to the filial affection of the two daughters of Mr. Everard, that, amid all “ the sad vicissitudes of things,” so much has been preserved of these family memorials. A selection from these Mr. Storey has kindly forwarded for the inspection of the members of this Society.

The late Dr. Macintyre, in a paper read before this

our's Society in 1857, entitled, "A Historical Sketch of Liverpool," says, after speaking of the establishment, in 1756, of "*Williams' Advertiser*,"—"The foundation of one of our "public institutions, the Liverpool Library, took place also "at this time. A few gentlemen had, for a year or two prior "to 1757, been in the habit of meeting together for the pur- "pose of discussing literary subjects, and of reading a portion "of the periodical publications of the day. They met from "time to time at the house of Mr. William Everard, an emi- "nent mathematician and surveyor, who lived in St. Paul's "Square. The small collection of books brought out on "these occasions was kept in a corner cupboard in Mr. "Everard's parlour."

It was in the year 1757, however, when the books becoming more numerous, had to be transferred from the cupboard to a large chest, that the idea of circulating them among the members of the club came to be entertained and acted upon.

To this cupboard, (still, as you perceive, in excellent preservation, raised 152 years since from doing duty as "a china "closet to the dignity of a book-case," and even now acting usefully and effectually in its original rank and capacity,) permit me to request your attention. Surely, gentlemen, we cannot regard it without a feeling of curiosity and interest, nor help rejoicing in the present happy contrast that the Library now presents to its first small and feeble beginnings. We surely cannot but rejoice when we think that this three-cornered cupboard, this triangular closet, certainly much more fit to be the receptacle of china than of literature, has expanded into that large circular area now enclosed by the walls of the Liverpool Library, and whose circumference is lined with so many thousands of volumes on every subject that can amuse and gratify, interest, instruct and elevate the human intellect.

Dr. Macintyre states that at the date of his paper, the Library contained 46,000 volumes; and at the present time, though repeated weedings have been made from its shelves of works of ephemeral interest and of obsolete novels, the number is 50,000 volumes.

Mr. Everard, who was appointed Librarian, removed from St. Paul's Square to Prince's Street, where he was to find a proper room for the books, and have a reasonable sum "for that and his trouble."

They did not long remain here, however, for in 1759 they were again removed to a building in John Street, belonging to Mr. Everard. The site of this building, on the west side of the street, about midway between Cook Street and Dale Street, is marked on the map of Liverpool, published by Perry in 1769. The Library occupied the first floor, and was approached by a flight of steps, at the end of a lobby passing through the centre of the building. For this room "and his trouble" Mr. Everard received £10 a year.

This arrangement lasted for twelve years, when the increasing professional practice of Mr. Everard compelled him to relinquish it; but though he no longer acted as Librarian, he still continued to be Landlord till the year 1786. By this time, the Library had enlarged so much beyond the accommodation afforded to it by the room in John Street, that a more spacious one, in a new building in Lord Street, erected on the principle of a tontine, was obtained at a rental of £18 per annum.

The subsequent history of the Library is given in the very interesting paper of Dr. Macintyre, to which I have already alluded.

The portraits which Mr. Storey has been so good as to send for the inspection of the Society, are those of Mr. Everard's father and mother, of Mr. Everard and his wife, and of one of his daughters. His father, who was an extensive farmer

at Linaere, was born in 1683, and died 5th January, 1760, at the age of 77 years. His mother, who died in December of the same year, met with her death in a singular manner, such as no lady in the present generation is likely to experience. She was riding on a pillion, to pay a visit to one of her daughters at Walton during her confinement, when the servant, behind whom she was riding, felt the grasp of her arm relax, and she fell to the ground. She was taken to an inn, then called the "Half-way House"—but long since demolished—and died almost immediately, in all probability of that disorder now called disease of the heart. The portrait of Mr. Everard represents him with a plan in his hand, on which a building is delineated, and he points complacently to a view of the building as it appeared when actually carried out, from which we may reasonably infer that Mr. Everard was not one of those architects of whom it may be said, that their designs look very pretty in the drawing but fail miserably in execution. It is the front elevation of the conservatory at Ince Blundell, and bears conspicuously an inscription in Latin, which, as far as I can understand it, means :—" Here reigns perpetual summer ; and the plants of " every climate flourish."

But, gentlemen, I hope you will excuse me if I venture to express my disapproval of the practice of putting up inscriptions in either ancient or modern foreign languages on English buildings. Surely our own most copious, powerful and noble language, which Milton and Shakspeare, and hundreds of others scarce less illustrious, have found sufficient to express their thoughts and embody their ideas, would supply suitable inscriptions for any public buildings, inscriptions that even he who runs may read, instead of one that not ten persons in ten thousand can understand. How much better is the inscription suggested by the late Prince Consort for the Royal Exchange in London—" The earth is the Lord's, and the ful-

ness thereof," than any inscription in another language, that none but a scholar can interpret, and is utterly unintelligible to the million.

I have not been able to identify any building now existing in Liverpool as having been designed by Mr. Everard; but the Liverpool of his day has long since been almost entirely demolished. Mr. Picton said, speaking from the place where I have now the honour to address you, that Liverpool has been almost entirely rebuilt within his recollection, and that sixty years was a very long term of existence for a Liverpool building; and as it is now eighty years since Mr. Everard became a tenant of that narrow house that, alas! awaits us all, it is highly probable that his works have been destroyed by the ruthless hand of time, or fallen before the stately and irresistible march of improvement.

It appears from his correspondence, particularly that with his wife, that he was a good deal employed at Preston and other places in the neighbourhood. That lady, who died 16th May, 1786, aged 61, six years before her husband, appears to have been a most suitable helpmate for him. She evidently was one of those women who are more precious than rubies, though not, I hope, quite so scarce: and her husband not only loved, but trusted and confided in her, even in matters of professional business. Here is a letter from him to her, one of many of a similar description:—

Dr Patty,

We had a very pleasant journey & got here before 12 o'clock & found all friends well but not much work done in my absence—I was not able to finish the Gallery Plan for Mr Bragg before I left but am very certain Carson will know how to cut the timber from the ground plan and the conversation we had together but for fear he should have forgotten any dimensions I have written them down for his direction & some further particulars respecting other parts of the brick work, which you'll send to Mr Bragg immediately and let him know I intend to be in Liverpool on wednesday or thursday next—with due respects to all friends

I am Dr Patty,

Yours most affectionately

WM EVERARD.

Preston 21 Apr. 1775.

The carefully painted miniature which I now exhibit is of one of his daughters, Miss Nancy, who married Wm. Fleetwood, a barrister, and died 27th March, 1790. Another daughter married Mr. William Smith, a merchant, who, having to make a voyage to Barbadoes, to establish a branch establishment there, was wrecked and drowned the day after he sailed from Liverpool. Here is a specimen of his handwriting, almost equal to copper-plate, written at the commencement of the acquaintance which resulted in Mr. Everard ultimately becoming his father-in-law.

Mr. Everard had two other daughters, Miss Patty and Miss Betty, who died unmarried.

Time rolls on its ceaseless course, and its revolutions often bring round the fashions and, dare I say, the follies of former ages. Here, probably above a hundred years old, are two ball room caps or hats, inside which are inscribed the names of Miss Patty and Miss Betty, fac similes of each other, except that Miss Betty's is a trifle the larger; and here, again, are two pair of ball-room slippers, that doubtless once belonged to the same ladies, the height of whose heels approaches the sublime, while their extreme narrowness borders closely on the ridiculous. I should have deemed the former altogether unparalleled, had I not lately seen them outdone—certainly by the bonnets, so called, I presume, on the principle of "*lucus a non lucendo*," of the fashion of the present day. About the altitude and breadth of the modern heels I am not quite so certain.

The sire of these ladies was not only industrious and prosperous in his profession, but must have been genial in his habits; and he was certainly, on suitable occasions, magnificent in his apparel. That "customary suit of solemn "black," which, like grim death, levels all distinctions of wealth, rank, and profession, and compels the nobleman, the clergyman, the brilliant beau of a ball-room, the waiter of a

hotel, and the solemn undertaker, to the inevitable white cravat and black coat, (causing numberless mistakes as to identity,) was not then in fashion. Behold here, gentlemen, these splendid dress waistcoats of a former age, not quite so brilliant, perhaps, as the celebrated plum-coloured velvet coat of Goldsmith, yet which are still infinitely to be preferred to the monotony of black and white of the gentlemen's attire at ball-rooms of the present day. And that he was a man of genial habits, is, I think, sufficiently proved by this ample and handsome crystal drinking cup, marked with his own initials.

Our forefathers did not, I think, work so hard and anxiously as we are compelled to do in this degenerate age. Even the learned gentlemen who formed the Committee of the Library, more than three-quarters of a century ago, knew how to combine their literary labours and duties with social enjoyment. Dr. Macintyre informs us that on the 13th of August, 1799, a rather amusing resolution was passed. The entry in the Committee Book is as follows:—

“ This day for the first time the Committee met at four
 “ o'clock in the afternoon, and having transacted the necessary
 “ business of the Library, they dined together at five o'clock,
 “ and spent the day with harmonious pleasantry; and it was
 “ Resolved unanimously, that the monthly Committee meet
 “ henceforward on the second Tuesday in the month at three
 “ o'clock, and that they afterwards dine together, that dinner
 “ be on the table at four o'clock precisely, and that the bill
 “ be called at six o'clock, when such gentlemen as chuse may
 “ depart, and such as chuse may club again; that red port
 “ be the only wine allowed, and that if any gentleman prefer
 “ white wine, he pay for it, distinct from his share of the
 “ general shot; and that all the wine be brought up in the
 “ original bottles from the bin, and decanted in the Club
 “ room.”

But though Mr. Everard could doubtless enjoy his glass, he appears, from the china tea cups belonging to him, and now exhibited, to have had no objection to the "cup that cheers but not inebriates." The size of these cups, as compared with the modern breakfast cups, renders somewhat less marvellous the stories of Dr. Johnson's enormous capacity for tea drinking. Certainly he described himself as a hardened, inveterate, and shameless tea drinker, who rarely gave his kettle time to cool: who with tea ushered in the evening, with tea solaced the midnight hour, and with tea welcomed the morning; but if his tea cups held no more than these, which a single reasonable sip would nearly empty, there seems nothing wonderful or even wrong, though the green tea during his long life was from 10s. to 15s. per pound, in disposing of twenty or even forty of them.

I must, however, solicit attention to another important fact in connexion with Mr. Everard's career. He was a scientific man, and had studied astronomy. There is a curious drawing by him of the progress of the sun's eclipse that took place in the middle of the last century.

"His soul proud Science often taught to stray
Far as the polar star and the Milky Way."

And his philanthropic wish to extend the benefits of science, prompted him to suggest the erection of an Observatory in Liverpool. Here, gentlemen, is an address drawn up by him, recommending the plan to the Corporation and the public of Liverpool, though too long for insertion here; and to this address is appended a list of the first subscriptions, commencing with the Corporation of Liverpool for 50 guineas, and followed by the names of the leading merchants of Liverpool at that time, in their own veritable signatures, forming together a curious and interesting document. The purchase of the land and the erection of the building seem

to have been entirely confided to Mr. Everard. Here is a collection of papers having reference to the observatory; and among them is an agreement with the Rev. Mr. Maddock, then Rector of Liverpool, for the purchase of a piece of land for the site, near St. Peter le Poer, on which Hope Street has been subsequently erected. The site of the Observatory was in all probability that now occupied by the Philharmonic Hall, as being the highest point of Hope Street. I am sorry to observe that though some of the subscriptions are marked as paid, others are without this significant memorandum; and I gather from a number of accounts in the same parcel, all made out to Mr. Everard, that he had not only to act as architect for the building, but to advance money for its erection; that he had not only to act as director of the works, but to dun for the money to pay the tradesmen with. I trust he got his own bill paid for professional services, and that his work was not only a labour of love, but that instead of barren reputation, he was rewarded by profit and emolument also.

After Mr. Everard's death a new Observatory was erected at St. James's Mount, and subsequently another by the Corporation at the north end of the Prince's Dock, with a residence for the astronomer. When a young man, I drew with my own hands the plans for this building, under the direction of Mr. Joseph Franklin, at that time architect and surveyor to the Corporation; but this structure has been superseded by another on a much more extensive scale, which stands on the summit of Bidston Hill.

In concluding, you will perhaps, have pleasure in being informed that Mr. Everard was enabled, notwithstanding his losses and his lawsuits in connexion with the Observatory, to retire from business some years before he died; and he lived a house built for himself at Linacre, where he closed his useful and honourable career in 1792, aged 69.

I cannot, however, bring this paper to a close without expressing the gratitude I feel to his lineal descendants, Mrs. Storey and the two Miss Lords for their great kindness in permitting these interesting family relics to be submitted to the inspection of this Society; and to Mr. Storey for the care and labour he has undergone in selecting and sending over whatever he considered might be interesting and valuable as throwing light on the history of Liverpool, and the incidents, customs, and apparel of bygone generations. He has taken the trouble to make a pious pilgrimage to the graves of his ancestors in Walton Churchyard, where many of the Everards are interred. There is a group of four tombs; two of them rise about three feet from the surface of the ground, and their sides are decorated with panels, while two are of a plainer description; and from these he has transcribed those dates which record their births and deaths, and serve to identify Mr. Everard and his family as the persons mentioned in this paper.

Yet inscriptions, however deeply engraved, are ultimately obliterated by the hand of time, and the stones themselves on which they are chiselled must, sooner or later, fall into decay. But published records are imperishable; and if, with regard to Mr. Everard, I have succeeded in recalling his almost vanished memory, and shall secure for his name an honourable position in the printed transactions of this Society; and if also, gentlemen, during the present evening I have given you the least information or entertainment—then, though at my time of life one seldom indulges in the pleasures of hope, the recollection of this evening will always prove a valuable as well as a permanent addition to the pleasures of memory.
