

greatness would end the 'Wonderful History of the Life and Death of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham,' a topic worthy of the very greatest Elizabethans.

We have now surely done enough to dignify the road, and need not seek for pictures from the civil war of Kentishmen hurrying to Kingston the day of the battle of Brentford, when the holding of the bridge was so important; or of Cromwell on his way to Hampton Court; or of other worthies of the Commonwealth period. Still less need we rummage in eighteenth century records of the baser sort for stories of highwaymen and roadside murders. We can even afford to ignore the contemporary prints (though they are very authentic) which represent the Militia, exceeding drunk and disorganised, galloping in carts down this very hill on its way to Portsmouth to embark for Ireland to quell the rebellion of '98. Better will it be to wait in peace the advent of some archaeological authority, who may shatter all our conclusions by disputing the antiquity of the road.

R. P. GARROLD.

JOHN INNES : AN APPRECIATION

JOHN INNES, of Merton, and his strangely munificent gift to the village in which he lived so long, and which he so largely transformed, must be a subject of interest to most of the people of the district for which the 'Annual' speaks, and to not a few beyond. Yet no adequate account—nay, one may even say, no partial account of so striking a character and so large a force has appeared, or, so far as I know, been attempted. I will not attempt that from which others have refrained; I design no memoir or complete biography, I have not sought information from his relatives to enlarge or correct my impressions, but I shall set down the man as I knew him, and his life in so far as he told it to me. How far a young man is disqualified from sketching the life and ways of one who died at more than three score years and ten must be obvious; but from a considerable degree of intimacy

which I enjoyed, and from the freedom with which he often spoke, I feel that I can record no little of the man and his life.

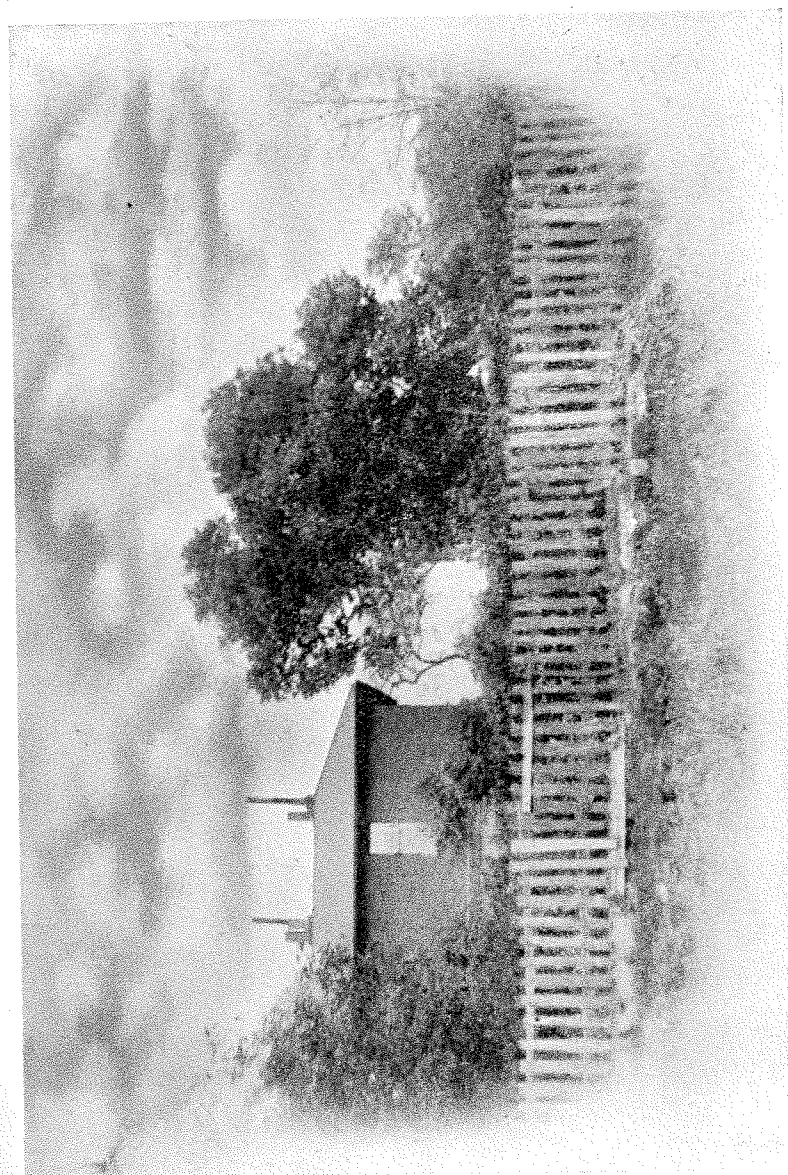
The Innes family is, of course, Scotch by descent, but has been settled in the south for something like a century. Some members of it had attained, I believe, to no little distinction in East Indian service; but Mr. John Innes' own side of the house was engaged in the West Indian trade, and had reached a competence therein. John Innes was the youngest of four children, three sons and a daughter. Of these Mr. James Innes was almost as well known to us at Merton as his brother, and he it was that struck out in the particular line of business in which the family fortune was made, while Charles, the next brother, graduated at Jesus College, Cambridge, became a clergyman, and died in New Zealand at a comparatively early age. Of his sister the sweetest and most fragrant memories remain; with a piety fervent and unashamed, zeal in good works, always governed by a sound common sense, an activity which rather scorned the nicer and more languid efforts of the younger generation, she seemed to embody for us not a few of the virtues and characteristics of Hannah More. Of John Innes I know nothing till one finds him at a Brighton boarding school, and of that his

recollections were by no means the sweetest. The master was a clerical fop and a bully, the fare was scanty, though the fees were high, and the subjects of instruction, almost entirely classical, very little to his taste. One thing in particular lingered in his memory: failure to repeat his collect on Sunday almost always entailed for him a thrashing, which was carefully saved up till after the weekly bath on the following Saturday, when, one supposes, it made a more lasting impression. 'I wish,' said he, 'they had taught us more French, for that was the only thing I ever did well in.'

His schooldays were quickly over; in fact, I rather fancy that one of the many crises which the West Indian trade experienced during the nineteenth century must have made it necessary for him to go into the city as soon as possible. Anyhow, he used to describe as the happiest days in his life those early ones when he worked from nine till nine, as often as not walking to and from Paddington, and all for a very few shillings a week. Only one story of those early days I can recall, and that he was very fond of telling. In his father's employment had been a clerk named Dutt, either a negro or oriental. Years passed, and Mr. Innes had to do in some way with a forged

cheque or bill. After looking at the doubtful signature he said, 'That's Dutt's writing.' This, however, was by no means the end of the trouble, for he had lost sight of Dutt for many years. However, before many hours had passed he had to examine another document—the transfer of some shares, I think—from the old Eastern Counties Railway and, to the surprise of his colleagues, exclaimed, 'That's Dutt's writing too.' The coincidence seemed impossible, but a messenger was sent to the offices of the railway company, and there Dutt was found. That he confessed the crime I remember, but how the matter ended I cannot now recall.

It was not, however, this West India trade which engaged the greater part of Mr. Innes' energies. Conditions of life and work in London altered entirely in the middle of the nineteenth century. The old shop and warehouse, often or even usually, with a dwelling house attached, began to give way to mere offices. Mr. Innes and his brother had the good fortune to anticipate the tendency of the times, and during the long period in which the demand for offices exceeded the supply, they were foremost in meeting it. As time went on their own capital proved inadequate for the business which gathered round them, and they therefore formed a limited liability company, though always



THE COTTAGE OF LORD NELSON'S GARDENER, MERTON PLACE
(SHEWING MULBERRY TREE SAID TO HAVE BEEN PLANTED BY NELSON)

From a photograph

retaining the direction of affairs in their own hands. This briefly is the history of their fortunes. Of the long story of their enterprise, the difficulties which our complicated land laws occasioned, the quaint old city folk with whom they had to deal, Mr. John Innes had much to say. The legal mind or the business mind would have retained his stories, but I, alas! can only say that his business life had been singularly varied and interesting.

Then came the enterprise which interests us most—the purchase and development of the Merton estate. The motives which underlay this were various, the desire to find a further outlet for capital, to provide himself with a suburban house outside the London smoke, yet within easy reach of his place of business, and that yearning which comes to many to leave a memorial in the houses they have built and the trees they have planted. The undertaking might have been a very profitable one; the estate lies low, but the soil is all of sand, and the damp river-fogs of the Thames valley trouble it but little; the surrounding country is pleasant and varied, and the possibilities of railway communication excellent. From the station on the estate Victoria, Ludgate Hill, and London Bridge could be reached without changing, while there was always the possibility

that the Brighton Company striking northward from Sutton, to secure a shorter route to the West End, might pass through Merton, or that an extension of the Metropolitan, crossing the South-Western at Wimbledon, might tap Merton and the parishes to the south. Many such projects there were during the thirty years and more that Mr. Innes controlled the Merton estate, and with all of them he was closely connected. But the history of them all was the same. The population of the district was too sparse to attract capital to the enterprise, while the opposition of the South-Western, determined to develop Wimbledon and to maintain its monopoly in the district, was too strong to be overcome save by an enterprise with immense capital behind it. Hence, though trains do run from Merton, they are too few and too slow to be of much real value, and Wimbledon—which, after all, is but half a mile away—is for practical purposes the Merton station. In later years Mr. Innes' efforts were directed to securing better and quicker access to Wimbledon station.

This failure to secure direct railway communication gave to the Merton estate its most marked characteristics. It was certain that it could not become really remunerative till a number of years had passed; in fact, not until

the available building land at Wimbledon had been occupied. Profits must come later—for many years Consols would have been a better investment, so Mr. Innes assured me—but in the meantime there was no little pleasure to be derived from making experiments and watching results. Things were done, not only because they might or should prove remunerative, but because there was a pleasure in doing them, and in watching how they turned out. Hence the great variety of size and style in the buildings, the pleasing irregularity in the lines of some of the roads, the great numbers and varied kinds of trees which everywhere abound. In particular the planting of trees was a great source of joy. Originally there were on the estate, poplars, many elms, and a few oaks and firs. The poplars are chiefly on the southern side of the estate, and had been planted by the Garths, the previous owners; but Mr. Innes did not like the tree and never planted it; elms, the commonest of Surrey trees, rot too quickly, and have too feeble roots to be safe near houses, though there are still some magnificent elms at Merton, particularly in the well-known rookery there, while oaks are of such slow growth that they are hardly suited to the needs of the residential estate. But birches and planes he planted in profusion, some of the

latter having already reached immense size; of chestnuts he made a splendid avenue, while many kinds of firs, willows, ashes and thorns are scattered through the plantations. The beech, though there are a few good copper beeches, never did very well at Merton. The holly, however, was certainly his favourite tree. How many thousands of them he planted I do not know, but the holly hedges which line so many of the paths, and are now coming into the full beauty of a green and vigorous maturity, will form for many years a striking memorial to the man.

In building, and building experiments, he took much pleasure. At one time he devoted much attention to making his own bricks in a field on the edge of Morden parish, and must have spent a good deal of money on elaborate machinery for use there; at another, concrete attracted his attention, and kerbs, walls, stables and houses were all built of this material. His own house was thirty years a-building, and was never, I think, really finished. Originally a small farm-house, he gradually transformed it into a country gentleman's residence of fair size, with excellent conservatories, and really extensive and up-to-date farm buildings. But I scarcely remember a time when there was not a mess in the house or the

out-buildings, for there was always some alteration in progress.

Farming, almost of necessity, became his hobby. If the land were not yet ripe for building, it might be farmed as it had been before, for I suppose there had been, besides the outlying property at Morden, at least three farms on the Merton estate. The one he selected for the centre of his experiments was the Hall Farm at Morden, and there he gradually constructed an extensive range of the most modern buildings, and accumulated a great stock of the best appliances. At first he went in for the old-fashioned general farming; indeed, to the last he had a well-filled rickyard. Then he tried growing for the London market, but not, I think, with any great success. Gradually, however, he put more of his land into pasture, for he found that with the steady growth of population there was an increasing demand for dairy products. It is, I suppose, no secret that he was at one time at the back of a large and successful dairy business. There were, of course, other experiments which he made, such as the growing of lavender. Of this he had at one time several large fields, very fragrant and interesting when the plant was in bloom, but not particularly attractive at other times. I think, however, that the Merton soil, unlike

that of Mitcham and Carshalton, was too light and dry for the experiment to be a success, and I remember that there was considerable difficulty in selling the flowers when cut. Anyhow, after some years the lavender was all grubbed up.

How much time he gave every week to the supervision of his farming operations I do not now remember; what really pleased him most was the regular walk to the farm after church on Sunday morning. Then the newest appliances were inspected and criticised, the sleek, large-eyed kine duly poked and petted, and, above all, the pigs admired. There were large pigs and small pigs, black pigs, white pigs, piebald pigs, even, I assure you, red pigs, pigs hairy and pigs smooth, pigs with snub noses, pigs with undoubtedly retroussé noses, pigs with no obvious noses at all; for the pig was his special hobby and delight and both at Morden and at his own house at Merton he had veritable palaces in which the pigs dwelt. Pigs paid him, I believe, and certainly they gave him ample pleasure and amusement. He showed them, of course, and took many prizes with them, until a valuable boar, on show at Oxford, turned upon his keeper and mangled his leg. After that Mr. Innes exhibited his pigs no more.

John Innes was a fighting man, as most people know. That is, he was a man of strong opinions, to which he adhered with great pertinacity, but there was no malice in his fighting, no illwill when the issue was determined. And there was cause for fighting at Merton in the old days. The parish was well endowed with charities, which grew as the value of houses and lands increased, without, owing to the changed habits of living, any corresponding increase in the demands upon them. Hence legitimate grounds for differences of opinion as to their application which for many years filled Merton with the tumult of debate. Looking back at the controversy one is constrained to admit that the hope of building up a system of technical instruction at the expense of an apprenticeship charity has not been realised, and that the secondary school is of but little use to the really poor of Merton; on the other hand, that a secondary school such as has been built on the foundation of the Rutlish Charity is of immense value to the neighbourhood as a whole and that a premature realisation of endowments in land would have ultimately entailed a serious loss, as indeed was the case with one of the smaller charities. What, however, struck me most in the course of

those contests was the extraordinary enthusiasm and affection for Mr. Innes shown by many of his workmen. It was perfectly clear that real affection, based on long years of mutual consideration, had taken the place of the ordinary relations of employer and employed.

Mr. Innes' attitude towards his workmen was, I take it, determined by his deep sense of the duty of the individual to the community. Before the housing of the working classes had attracted the attention that it does now he was experimenting—and often with great success—on the subject. Strong Tory as he was, he denied that the question could be approached from the economic standpoint alone; the owner of land and the employer of labour were bound, he contended, for the sake of the future interests of the race to provide healthy accommodation for the workers who lived in relation to them. Certainly, the cottage property which he built is a grand monument to the man. Of clubs, again, he saw the great value. Quite independently of the Oxford House experiments in Bethnal Green he set to work upon a club for boys, which after many years of usefulness is to be maintained, I understand, by his trustees. A men's club followed in due course and met with an equal measure of success.

It is time, perhaps, to speak of the personal habits and feelings of the man. I have sketched a man of strong opinions and marked idiosyncracies, withal a man of wide human sympathies and always more tender than he represented himself to be. No man was ever, I suppose, more illogical. The feeding of school-children by the State he would most certainly have opposed as the thin end of the socialistic wedge; yet for many years any hungry school-child in Merton was fed at his expense. His objection to a man using a public-house was very great, yet I remember his asserting, 'I would never employ a teetotaller,' though all the while he must have known that some of his most trusted workmen were prominent teetotal advocates. The charity of the newspaper column he loathed and, indeed, professed to doubt the value of giving at all, but this I know, both from a clergyman who for many years was his secret almoner and from a layman who at one time had access to his accounts, that few men have given more generously than he. In religion he was a sound but not extreme churchman, always attending his parish church, though I think he would have preferred services rather more advanced than those at Merton. He often spoke of All Saints',

South Wimbledon, as the model church in the neighbourhood, and had, I know, a great admiration for Mr. Pickering. In Scotland, too, he was particular to attend the episcopal church. I remember his finding fault with me for calling St. Giles' in Edinburgh a cathedral, on the ground that no bishop had his throne there. However, of religious things he did not often speak, though I think no one ever doubted the sincerity of his convictions.

Of his great benefaction to Merton I can say but little. He did, I know, at one time contemplate the foundation of a museum at Merton, and with him I visited several local collections in the North of England. But it was to be on a modest scale—at a cost about the same as that of the Rutlish School—and he always spoke of his nephew, Mr. Ernest Innes as the heir to the bulk of his fortune. When he changed his mind I do not know, but my residence at Durham naturally caused me to see less of him.

Such was the man as I knew him; in some respects an ordinary British merchant, but to one who looked deeper a man of singular capacity and much originality. Upon Merton he has left a lasting mark; his houses, great and small, and the public buildings connected with his name—the Rutlish Schools, Boys'

Club, Men's Club, and Masonic Hall—are no unworthy monument to any man. But beyond all this he had a singular instinct for compelling friendship, and has made for himself a more abiding monument in the hearts of troops of friends.

*'Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit
Nulli flebilior quam mihi.'*

G. H. GODWIN.