

**MR. EDWARD FOSTER,
THE DERBY CENTENARIAN.**

"Hail hoary pilgrim! venerable man!
What changes hast thou seen since life began;
What vast improvements in this land of ours:
Knowledge has spread, and men's inventive powers
Wonders have wrought, to lessen human toil,
Extend our commerce, and enrich our isle.
Statesmen have pleaded, poets sweetly sung,
To break the ponderous chain oppression hung
Round Afric's sons; and thou hast lived to see
Britannia set her injured negroes free.
What wonders, too, has piety achieved,
What moral wastes of barrenness relieved;
What graceful structures rear'd for praise and prayer,
That heavenward point, and that for heaven prepare."
Beebe' Eyre.

Mr Foster, the "Centenarian," as he is generally called, was born in the parish of All Saints', Derby, on the 8th of November, 1762, and died on the 12th of March, 1865, at the ripe and extraordinary age of one hundred and two years and one hundred and twenty-four days. Well might our talented poet exclaim :-

"Foster! the life is spared beyond the span,
The fleeting period in the life of man,"

for certainly it is allotted to few men to reach such a ripe old age.

Edward Foster was the son of a gentleman of that name, who had filled the office of land-steward to the late Sir Robert Burdett, Bart., of Foremark, Derbyshire. His grandfather was Robert Howard, son of the Duke of Norfolk of that day, who, having taken the side of the Pretender in the Scotch rebellion of 1715, was compelled to seek obscurity to avoid being tried for high treason. This he accomplished by changing his name from Howard to Hayward, and following the occupation of a gardener in the service of a gentleman named Cotton, and subsequently in that of a farmer. He, like his grandson, lived to a patriarchal old age, having died at one hundred and four, and his wife at one hundred and three. This, we see that he came of a long-lived stock, a stock remarkable for an ample development of the vital apparatus, a capacious chest, large lungs, heart, stomach, all betokening ancestral and extraordinary longevity.

Of Edward Foster it could not be said, as Manfred represents mankind in general :-

"There is an order
Of mortals on earth who do become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,

Without violence of warlike death;
Some perishing of pleasure, some of study,
Some of disease, and some of insanity,
And some of withered or broken hearts;
For this is a malady that slays
More than are number'd in the lists of fate,
Taking all shapes, and bearing many names."

But he wore out quietly, naturally, till the circling hours

"Brought the appointed time of rest,
And laid him down in death."

The subject of this sketch entered the Derby Militia, as ensign, when little more than seventeen years of age; but, volunteering into the line, he was promoted to a lieutenancy in the 20th Regiment of Foot, and served under Marquis Cornwallis towards the close of the American revolution. He went afterwards with his regiment to Holland, under the Duke of York, and was under Sir Ralph Abercrombie in Egypt, and was a witness of the burial of that commander. From that period to the year 1805 he was stationed at Deal or Walmer, and often dined at the same table as the hero Nelson. Singularly enough, he quitted the profession of arms the very day on which Nelson was killed at Trafalgar, and betook himself to the fine arts, for which he had natural proclivities, and a cultivated taste. His portraits were a success, and gave the fullest gratification. He received the appointment of "Miniature Painter to the Royal Family," and received the special patronage of Queen Charlotte and the Princess Amelia, who appreciated his talents and his character. He had apartments allotted him in the Round Tower at Windsor Castle, and his intimacy therein may be judged by the fact that he was frequently invited to join the royal circle in a game of whist. This appointment, besides its honour, was one of considerable pecuniary benefit to Mr. Foster, through the connection it gave him amongst the principal nobility. Afterwards, he exercised his profession as a profilist in various towns in the kingdom, and took the portraits of Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and many other distinguished characters of the day. There are many alive now who can remember Mr. Foster practising as an artist in the Corn-Market, Derby, between forty and fifty years ago; and many of his artistic performances are still extant, in the possession of ourselves and other inhabitants of the town, which speak for themselves.

As a profilist his merit was something remarkable. He invented a machine, which, from its neatness and mathematical construction, was ranked amongst the most ingenious things of the day. The following complimentary lines, by the poet Ramsay, on the invention referred to, will give the reader some idea of its character. They appeared in the Macclesfield Courier, May, 1811 :-

"First from the shadow on the polish'd wall
Were took those faces which profile we call;
The first was drawn by the Corinthian dame,
Who, by the art, immortalized her name;
From posture next improving on her plan,
The artist with the pencil took the man;
Yet oft the lines where blemishes prevail'd,
Were taught to flatter, and the likeness fail'd.

But how to form machines to take the face
With nice precision in one minute's space;
To paint with bold, unerring certainty
The face profile, in shades that time defy,
Where all allow the likeness to agree,
This honour, Foster, was reserved for thee."

Some time after the death of his royal patrons, Mr. Foster began to occupy his mind in the production of a series of educational charts for scholastic purposes; and these charts, to the day of his death, he continued to prepare and dispose of, as a source of income, though, at the same time, for the last thirty years of his life he presented no less a number than 5344 gratuitously to parochial and other schools. He believed that the grand aims of life could only be accomplished by a sacrifice of self: he carried with him to the grave the blessed satisfaction that he did his duty as far as in him lay to his fellows, by imparting to them as a free gift the knowledge he had gained at much cost and experience. Among these charts may be mentioned first, "A Chronological Analysis of the Old and New Testaments;" second, a chart of the "Histories of Rome, France, and Britain" third, a chart of the Histories of England from B.C. 1100 to A.D. 1852;" and "A Chronological Chart of the History of the British Empire." In a word, Edward Foster, by his cheerful and ingenious labours in the field of educational literature, not only contributed much to the success of our schools, but conferred a benefit on the nation, which, we fear, it but little knows.

Edward Foster was married five times. His fifth wife survives him, as does her only daughter, Phillis Howard Foster, both of whom, we regret to announce, are left totally unprovided for. As he had claims on the gratitude of the public, these claims are surely now due to his widow and daughter, and we trust they will not be withheld.

By his first wife, Elizabeth Ward, Mr. Foster had a son who acquired considerable celebrity as an advocate and lecturer on behalf of the Polish refugees. He also had a daughter, who was a very clever artist; but all his sons and daughters by previous marriages have preceded him to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns."

Mr. Foster's numerous marriages were the cause of no little badinage and many jokes at his expense in his day; and amongst various specimens of the kind, we select the following from the pen of a lady :-

"Mr. Foster married a wife, and then he lost her;
He married a second, then a third,
And then a fourth, upon my word!
Laugh not, good sirs, for, I protest,
A fifth is added to the rest,
And a fair daughter calls him sire
At fivescore years. You must admire
My tale, if true, -
Why, Sir, I mean five score and two !"

Mr. Foster was in stature about five feet four inches, of a good complexion, well made, and very active. With great equability of temper he possessed a constant flow of spirits, which rendered him

a pleasing companion, while his manners were natural, simple, and unassuming. He was one of those whose labour is their pleasure; he was never elevated by success or praise into negligence, nor wearied by neglect into impatience. He was endowed with a marvellous power of memory, which rendered his conversation on past events a brilliant treat to those, who like the writer, were honoured with his friendship. His social virtues in all the relations of his life rendered him the centre of a variety of agreeable friends, many of whom now miss him greatly.

Age, in Mr. Foster's case, as it should do in all, brought with it veneration, respect, and calm delights. He could repeat with the poet :-

"Though I am old, yet I am strong and lusty;
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood"

to any great excess.

As his long winter approached its termination, much of it was spent amidst the cheering sympathy of those who appreciated him. We are glad to state the late Lord Palmerston granted him £60 from the Royal Bounty Fund, which was well deserved, and proved of much service to him in his declining years. We are happy also to record that several complimentary dinners were given to Mr. Foster, when our municipal authorities and townsmen vied with each other in tendering honour to his reverend age and high character.

At the birthday dinner given to congratulate him on attaining the ripe age of one hundred years, Mr. H. Adams, the chairman, said :-

"Mr Vice-President and Gentlemen, - Having known our friend and guest, Mr. Foster, for a considerable number of years, I readily consented to preside over this highly respectable gathering, in compliance with the wishes of his friends. Many of Mr. Foster's earlier friends have passed away, but some of his later acquaintances are here to congratulate him upon his present good health, and to wish him continued good health and happiness. (Cheers) Our juvenile friend who sits on my right, looking more like a young Archbishop than a centenarian, - (laughter.) - betrays no signs of rapidly failing health, notwithstanding a life of great activity and vicissitude. Born on the 8th of November, 1762, in the first American war, many years ago he joined the militia, and when the French revolution broke out he went to Egypt with General Abercrombie, and at his death Mr. Foster returned home with one hundred and four men all more or less afflicted with ophthalmia. His friends persuaded him to leave the army, which he did on the day Nelson died. Being of an active turn of mind, and having also a taste for the fine arts, he in the first instance invented and patented a machine ; and, in the second instance, he turned his attention to the fine arts. At the death of his son he took to the publishing trade, having compiled some charts, many thousands of which have been sold to clergymen and other ministers, and have found ready acceptance in public and private schools. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, I cannot detail you at this festive board by relating all the incidents in our guest's varied life. I trust that you will not consider that we are doing homage to a second Bluebeard when I inform you that our guest has been the husband of five wives, (much laughter,) that he has seventeen children, (renewed laughter,) that the first-born, if now living, would have attained her seventy-eighth year, and that the last and only one which has been left, we hope to solace and comfort him in his declining days, only a few days ago celebrated her tenth birthday.

(Cheers and laughter.) As a proof that Mr. Foster is not a Bluebeard, I need only point out these facts to prove his veneration for and his high appreciation of the fair sex. (Cheers and laughter.) Though the snowy locks of our guest attest increasing years, yet if we look at his clear complexion, his bright eye when it flashes up, though at times a little dimmed withal, his clear intellect and retentive memory, we will not despair of being spared to meet him again even another year. (Cheers.) We all hope that years of happiness and prosperity are still in store for him : That, however, is a matter entirely within the dispensations of a gracious Providence, to whose behests we must all humbly bow. (Hear, hear.) But when our friend has entered the dark 'valley of the shadow of death,' having faith and hope of a bright future, he will at least have the consolation of knowing that he did not pass away from our midst unwept, unhonoured, and unsung. (Loud cheers.) Gentlemen, I give you 'Continued health, happiness, and prosperity to our juvenile friend, Mr. Foster.'" (Cheers and laughter.)

(Three times three cheers were given.)

Mr. Foster, on rising, had a hearty reception. He said :- "Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, - The present moment is the happiest of my life. I am not used to making speeches, but I know how to be grateful. Providence has been kind to me. I am an old man, but get my living by my own labour, and I hope to be able to continue to do so as long as there is a necessity. (Cheers.) I hope to live a few years longer to meet my friends on future occasions. (Cheers.) You are kind to me, and I am grateful to you. Good health, prosperity, and happiness to you all in this world, and blessings in the world to come." (Loud cheers.)

His last hours were worthy of a good Christian. He died in serenity and happiness, in the full assurance of a joyful resurrection; and his earthly remains were interred in the New Cemetery, Derby, on the 16th of March, 1865.