

HENRY FINCH RIX, B.A.

A MEMOIR.

Henry Finch Rix was born at Woolwich, England, on the 12th of January, 1848, and came to Victoria with his parents in 1853. He attended the Wesleyan Denominational School at Chilwell, Geelong, and subsequently "Flinders," then known as the National Grammar School, Geelong, during the headmasterships of Mr. G. Wilson Brown, M.A., and Mr. (afterwards Dr.) George Morrison, M.A.

He entered the service of the Education Department as assistant teacher in the Urquhart-street school, Ballarat, and resigned this position, in 1869, to become a master in Grenville College. After twelve months there, he rejoined the Government service as assistant in Ironbark school, Sandhurst. The head masters of these schools—Messrs. John Lowther, H. B. de la Foer Wall, M.A., and John Rae respectively—thus testified their opinion of his worth—"His teaching has been with great zeal and ability, and his earnestness, patience, and kindness in imparting instruction, as well as his efforts to promote school sports, have won for him the love of his pupils. His urbanity has endeared him to all."

"He has conducted himself in school and out of school as a Christian gentleman should. . . . He has shown an interest in teaching which is rare. . . . He had the entire management of the Civil Service class, and of the mercantile department."

"He has given proof of superior attainments. . . . He possesses great natural aptitude for teaching. . . . Mr. Rix's walk, speech, and behaviour have been such as to leave a lasting impression for good on the minds of his pupils."

In 1873, Mr. Rix became mathematical master at Wesley College, fulfilling the duties of that position with much success for ten years. Referring to his career at Wesley, the head master, Professor Irving, wrote to Mr. Rix in 1882—"I remember with great pleasure our relations at Wesley College, for I had every reason to be thoroughly satisfied with the manner in which you did your duty to the boys specially under your care, and to the school at large. . . . I know you to be clear-headed, painstaking, and scrupulously just."

The succeeding head master, Professor Andrews, wrote of his work at Wesley—"I had ample opportunity of observing, not only his work, method, and bearing as a master, but also as a student, and I can gladly say that he is careful, accurate, earnest, and conscientious in all that he does. . . . he has great powers of keen observation, and of drawing therefrom important inferences. Personally, Mr. Rix is a genial and kind-hearted man, who is fitted by his disposition to discharge delicate duties without giving offence and pain, and who will win the respect of both superiors and subordinates."

The Rev. Dr. Waugh, sometime President of the college, said of him—

"After ten years of energetic work at Wesley College, both in school and in sports, Mr. Rix has taken his departure, followed by the grateful recollections of us all. If conscientious discharge of duty, and enthusi-

astic interest in his work, together with ability, are calculated to promote a man in his position, we can confidently look forward to his advancement."

Being an athlete, Mr. Rix took special interest in the athletics of the school. He himself played for some time in the first twenty of the Carlton Football Club. He was fond of recalling the "Well played, Carlton!" that the Wesley boys were accustomed to greet him with on a Monday morning, after a hard-fought battle on the previous Saturday.

On account of his genial disposition, the college boys often called him "Pax."

He was also a member of the old Volunteer Force, and became a crack rifle shot.

In 1876, Mr. Rix married Miss Sutton, daughter of a well-known Ballarat citizen. Mrs. Rix's musical and artistic talents are well known. The family consists of two daughters.

While teaching, and unable to attend any of the lectures at the University, he passed the examinations required for the degree of B.A., which was conferred upon him in 1881.

From Wesley College Mr. Rix, in 1883, joined the inspectorial staff of the Education Department, being first appointed to the Beechworth district. Except for a short period in what was then the Woodend inspectorate, he remained in the Beechworth district until 1900, when he took charge of the Seymour district, in which are included several metropolitan schools.

As an inspector of schools, Mr. Rix realized many of the highest ideals of that office. Concurrently with the exacting routine work of an inspector, he was always evolving more rational methods of teaching the various subjects. The results of his unceasing labour and his matured judgment were freely placed at the disposal of his district teachers, many of whom thus received valuable training in advanced teaching methods. To that end, school memoranda were in constant circulation in his inspectorates. He rendered valuable service in the drafting of the last Teachers Bill; while the first draft of the Bill for the registration of teachers was really born in his house. He was one of the pioneers in the movement for organizing teachers' congresses, and for establishing school libraries. He strongly supported the Arbor-day movement. He was instrumental in having a row of plane-trees planted in the street in which he lived in South Yarra. Mr. Rix has been known to get out of his buggy and plant seeds by the wayside. Several streams in the North-eastern district were stocked with fish procured by him from the Geelong hatcheries.

His attitude towards the teachers under his supervision was friendly and reassuring. It can, perhaps, be best understood by his intimation to them: "I wish you to regard me as the head teacher of the district, and, as such, to turn to me for advice and guidance." His relations with the school children were kindly and paternal. On severing his connexion with the Beechworth district in 1900, the teachers took leave of him in such terms as these—"The educational world has, for the past ten years, been in a state of unrest, and, through that period, we ascribed it as part of our good fortune to have had in you an inspector keen to observe the natural trend of innovation, and eager to spread your observations amongst

us. Your kindly, sympathetic nature has so endeared you to us as co-workers in the important charge of educating the young, that your presence was always welcomed by us, who unanimously accepted you as guide, philosopher, and friend."

Mr. Rix's ability and devotion to duty were, naturally, highly valued by the authorities of the Education Department. In 1894, Mr. G. Wilson Brown, M.A., formerly Secretary of the Department, wrote:—

"Of your value no one, I think, has had better opportunity of judging than myself, and I can truly say that, during the time I had the honour of being head of the Department, your discharge of your duties was characterized by marked ability, unflinching industry, a whole-hearted interest in the work, and a determination to keep abreast of every advance in educational matters."

Mr. T. Brodribb, M.A., another ex-Secretary, said—"I should do scant justice if I did not say that Mr. Rix was always regarded by me as one of the best inspectors that have ever served under the Department. . . . I will particularly instance a difficult task which I gave him in connexion with the new *Australian Reading Books* (for which work he was specially fitted). The duty allotted was performed with much skill and success."

The late Mr. Robert Craig, M.A., LL.B., formerly Assistant Inspector-General, said—"I formed a high opinion of your ability, accuracy, and earnestness in the performance of your duties. . . ."

He was always opposed to the system of payment by results. The present great forward movement in State education, initiated by the Director (Mr. Tate), owes much to Mr. Rix's scholarship, skill, and clear-sightedness. In the compilation of the arithmetic programme, admittedly an ideal one, Mr. Rix took a prominent part. He also devised the present form of the children's printed examination papers, and formulated the general scheme of marks for the evaluation of the various subjects in the curriculum. This scheme is now used in appraising the proficiency of each class in the school.

Some idea of his educational activity may be gathered from the following summary:—He adapted the *Southern Cross* series of *Arithmetics* to accord with the Victorian programme of instruction; wrote *The Pictorial Method of Number Teaching* (this book earned a very favorable notice from the late Colonel Parker); *The Progressive Analysis of Numbers*; *Circular of Information, No. 1—Arithmetic for Infants and Class I.*; *The Austral Table and Mental Arithmetic Books*: a monograph on *Decimal Coinage*; various articles in the *Education Gazette*; and invented a *Mechanical Powers Apparatus* (acknowledged to be the most complete contrivance of its kind yet devised); an improved form of siphon; a *Colour Chart*: an abacus, and several other aids to the teaching of number. Almost his last service was to draw up an improved form of work programme, which is the basis of one to be issued, with official approval, in the next number of this paper.

Towards the close of last year, he received notice of his promotion to the grade of senior inspector.

For some time, Mr. Rix's health had been causing anxiety. He was liable to attacks of insomnia. Yielding at last to the solicitations of his friends, he obtained

two months' furlough, and had booked passages for himself and family for a trip to England and the Continent. He looked forward with much pleasure to this complete rest and change, and to a return to the work he loved so well; but it was not to be. On the 8th of February, his illness suddenly assumed an acute form, and, in spite of medical skill and devoted nursing, it terminated fatally on Tuesday, the 27th of the same month.

His death came as a great shock to his friends. The expressions of grief, and of sympathy for Mrs. Rix and her family, were very frequent throughout the Education Office. It is difficult to realize that he has gone—that the familiar figure and the genial greeting will be seen and heard no more. The Director of Education interpreted the general feeling in saying that Mr. Rix's removal is a severe loss to the Education Department, and to the cause of State education.

On more than one occasion, his colleagues on the inspectorial staff had, as a body, expressed their personal regard for their old friend, and their appreciation of the genuine and formative character of his educational work. Only a few days before his illness, his colleagues, then met in conference, offered Mr. Rix their cordial good wishes for an enjoyable, recreative holiday, and asked his acceptance of a souvenir from them. They and he little realized that this was the last farewell. A large number of the officers of the Education Department, inspectors, and teachers, attended the funeral. A beautiful wreath was sent from the Education Office. The pall-bearers were Mr. Tate (Director), Mr. Swindley (Chief Inspector), Mr. Hamilton (Assistant Chief Inspector), and Messrs. Ware, Russell, Long, Carew-Smyth, and Fussell. Among those gathered, at the graveside were Messrs. G. Wilson Brown and Thos. Brodribb, formerly secretaries of the Education Department; and Alexander Stewart, ex-Inspector-General. After an impressive service, the remains of the man who lived such a strenuous, self-sacrificing life were laid to rest. Mr. Rix left the world he moved in better than he found it, and now—

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well."

Numbers of men and women, bearing the burden and heat of the day, will gratefully cherish his memory. The recollection of the rallying, cheery word, the hearty hand-grasp, the light so often thrown on difficulties, will still act as an incentive to many of those who were privileged to know him.

His character and his ideals are reflected in the following extract from a letter written by him to his eldest daughter on her birthday—"The best way to insure unflinching happiness—happiness tempered with chastening sorrows—is to justify our existence by the work we do for our fellows. In doing this with pure motive, we are workers with God, albeit our thoughts are given to concentrate themselves on the work, and not look beyond to the Great Being who is our Coadjutor."

Henry Finch Rix was of those of whom it is said—

"They may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

AT SCHOOL.

From a letter thoughtfully forwarded by Mr. R. W. Smith, the head teacher of the Footscray State School, No. 1912, we extract the following, in reference to Mr. Rix's schoolboy days:—

My late brother and I were his intimate schoolmates, and attended the Central Wesleyan (Denominational) School in Geelong, under the head mastership of Mr. Charles Rashleigh, now Lieutenant-Colonel Rashleigh. After a few years, Mr. E. R. Lennon was appointed to that position, and became one of the most successful teachers in Victoria.

The saying that "the child is father to the man" is true in connexion with Henry, or better known as "Harry" Rix.

As a boy, he was most enthusiastic in everything he undertook, entering heart and soul into all studies, and giving signs of the possession of an active intellect. As an instance of this, when Pitman's shorthand, at that time a novelty, was introduced by a visiting teacher, he entered into a study of that subject with avidity, and, with my brother Harry, soon became proficient. Every new idea started at that period, such as phrenology, physical culture, &c., was eagerly seized upon and mastered as far as a boy's power would allow.

He gave great satisfaction to his instructors, and was looked upon as one of the cleverest pupils in the school. He was a true friend, and one whose word was always relied upon. Afterwards he became a pupil teacher under the Department of Public Instruction.

MASTER AT WESLEY COLLEGE.

To our request for some particulars of Mr. Rix's work as a master at Wesley College, Mr. F. Goldstraw, M.A., the head master of the Toorak Grammar School, kindly supplied the following:—

About the middle of the seventies, Wesley College received, as an addition to its staff, a man of very distinctive character, in the person of Mr. H. F. Rix.

He was then a vigorous athlete, delighting especially in long tramps, and was a member of the leading football club in Victoria. His strength and experience as a footballer proved very useful to the boys at Wesley, and caused him to be at once appointed sports master; and his enthusiasm soon spread, leaven-like, among the teams. Out of school, he seemed to live merely to advance the interests of the games. One proof of that consuming energy stands to this day. At that time, the front grounds were mere bush; so Mr. Rix spent one midsummer vacation in surveying the space, and drawing out plans for the conversion of the paddock into a convenient and handsome cricket ground. This scheme, though shelved for the time, was realized in later years. To any one who knew Mr. Rix, it is needless to say that all these toils were carried out at fever heat—"full speed ahead."

I have spoken of the athletic side of his work first, not as being his best, but as, from its nature, giving the fullest scope for independent effort. Another opportunity of displaying the same qualities he found in the editorship of the *Wesley College Chronicle*. This task, like every other work he undertook, was performed without regard to expenditure of energy or invasion of his hours of leisure.

But the finest qualities of a man's nature are, perhaps, shown in the conscientious discharge of regular duties. For Mr. Rix, the word "duty" was full of meaning. In this phase of his career, too, whatsoever his hand found to do, he did it with his might, so that he gained the esteem, not only of his head master and colleagues, but also of his boys, who felt that their master would spare no pains to secure their progress. It is characteristic of the man that, while neglecting no school engagements, he could still find time and strength to go through the Arts course, and take his degree without the material help of attendance at lectures.

Moreover, all this passion for work was combined (which is not always the case) with a genial attitude towards his fellows, that endeared him to all. Mr. Rix's memory will be cherished as that of an amiable, earnest, and high-souled man, to whom, in farewell, we may say—

"So didst thou travel on life's common way
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on itself did lay."

INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS: A TEACHER'S TRIBUTE.

Years ago, a broad-shouldered, full-bearded man used to visit my school in the bush. He would come in with a friendly smile, and a genial grip of the hand. His cheery "Good morning, children!" always called forth an unaffected response. Then he would set to work in a business-like way, with a keen eye for details, an attention to minutæ that was somewhat disconcerting till one got to see that it was due to an all-absorbing desire for thoroughness—the main characteristic of the man. To the full extent that time permitted, he would strive to get an estimate of the work done since last inspection; and he set down his record with impartial fairness. One felt that, amidst the disappointments one has to undergo on all such occasions, His manner towards teacher and pupils was courteous, kindly, encouraging. The faults he met with never provoked the cheap sneer, the ill-natured word, the sarcastic epigram. His aim was to help, not to wound; his demeanour that of an elder brother. He never pointed out a weakness without suggesting a remedy drawn from his own experience or his wide acquaintance with the literature of his profession. He could teach as well as examine, and his unobtrusive demonstration of this outweighed his precepts. At the close of the day, one watched him drive out of the gate—by-the-bye it was slip-rails then—with the thought, "There goes a true friend and helper. There goes a man!"

It is no wonder such a nature won its way to the hearts of his fellow-workers. When the teachers of the North-east met at Wangaratta to bid him farewell, there was a genuine manifestation of respect and affection. The speeches were lame perhaps, but the spirit of the meeting was unmistakable.

A few years later, I saw him again at work. He had aged sadly in the interim. Over-interest in his profession had resulted in over-exertion, and this had played havoc with the bodily machine. Prolonged nervous tension generally shows itself in irritability, but here it was

not so. Though the evil consumed inwardly, outwardly there was greater patience and gentleness. Towards the end, I was privileged to catch a glimpse of his home-life. It confirmed my previous estimate of his worth, his unselfishness, his unvarying kindness.

And now he has gone, long before the allotted span. One may ruminate on the fact that over-work, however magnificent it may be, is suicidal, and may be tempted to think of its rewards as uncertain here and problematical hereafter. But one knows, far-off, that, to the true servant of humanity, such considerations count for little. It is the passionate devotion to duty that makes the hero, and, to such a one, a few years more or less are neither here nor there. We, who are unheroic, can at least revere.