

Memorial for the Reverend CJ Vernon

1892  
IN MEMORIAM.

The Hon. and Rev. C. J. Vernon.

IN the quiet country Churchyard at Grafton Underwood, on Tuesday, the mortal remains of the Hon. and Rev. C. J. Vernon were laid to rest, amid the grief of friends, with whom the deceased had long been connected in public duties, and parishioners, who, for the space of 37 years, had looked to him as their ecclesiastical head. It was not to be wondered at that on the day of the funeral, although the weather was unfavourable, there was a large attendance of people from Kettering and other parts of the district to pay the last mark of respect to the departed; for his genial disposition, and the fact that he carried out his many public duties in a conscientious and assiduous manner, had gained him many friends. His presence will be missed on the Bench at Kettering, at the County Council, and in other capacities; and his advice and help to the Conservative cause and the Primrose League (of which he was an ardent supporter) will also be lost, to the regret of those who had learned to appreciate his ready aid. The general sympathy and respect manifested must be some consolation to the bereaved. It will be seen that at Burton Latimer, on Tuesday evening, the Rev. Sir F. L. Robinson feelingly referred to the late Mr. Vernon; and the Chairman of the Kettering Bench, on Wednesday, paid a similar eulogistic tribute. The testimony in each instance was sincere and heartfelt, and it may be well affirmed of the deceased gentleman that he will

To his dear descendants leave  
The first best wish that man can claim:  
Better than pomp—by crowds adored—  
Or gold immeasurably stored—  
A pure and spotless name!

To the general regret of all classes throughout a wide district, the hand of death has again taken away a prominent personage from our midst, the deceased being the Hon. and Rev. Courtenay John Vernon (Rector of Grafton Underwood, and brother and heir to Lord Lyveden), whose death occurred on Saturday evening, after a somewhat prolonged illness.

The news quickly spread, and on Sunday it seemed that everyone had heard of the sad loss which had been sustained. We have, during the past few weeks, referred to the illness of the hon. gentleman, and although no sanguine hopes were entertained of his recovery, the intelligence of his death came as a shock to very many. The rev. gentleman, who had been at Grafton for nearly forty years, had been ailing for some time, but he was able to get about and attend to his duties up to the beginning of May. His friends had, however, noticed that for a long time he had seemed to be breaking, and it was not surprising to them that he had to seek change of air. He then went down to Harrogate, in the hope that the treatment he would receive would effect an improvement, but the complaint from which he was suffering—gout—developed other complications, and he got no benefit. In fact, he seemed to get worse, and was, therefore, removed to Grafton, where he was confined to his bedroom, and was in a most critical condition. For five weeks he was constantly attended by his medical adviser, Mr. J. J. Roughton, J.P., of Kettering. The condition of the rev. gentleman gradually became worse, and he passed away peacefully on Saturday evening, in the presence of the members of his family.

The deceased will be much missed throughout the district, for he was generally respected for his genial manner, and in connection with the many public offices he held he carried out the duties most assiduously and conscientiously. The hon. gentleman was born in 1828, and was thus in his 64th year. He was educated at Eton, and obtained his B.A. degree at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1851. He was appointed Rector of Grafton Underwood in 1854, the patron of the living being his brother, Lord Lyveden, who was born in 1824, and whose seat is at Farming Woods, Thrapston.

The deceased was married in 1856 to Alice Gertrude, daughter of the Rev. Maurice Fitzgerald-Stephens-Townshend, M.A., of Castle Townshend, Co. Cork, and Dingle, in Kerry, Ireland, Vicar of Thornbury, Gloucestershire, and had, with other issue, Courtenay, Robert Percy Vernon, Esq., who was born in 1857, and who is now heir presumptive to the barony. The latter resides at Stanwick, and some three years since married Miss Hill, sister of Major Hill, of Wollaston Hall. The Hon. and Rev. C. J. Vernon was qualified as a Justice of the Peace on July 3rd, 1856. For some years he had been Chairman of the Kettering bench of magistrates, and in the fulfilment of the duties there was always unremitting attendance and careful and conscientious in the administration of justice. He was also a leading member (*ex-officio*) of the Kettering Board of Guardians, in the business of which he took a most active interest. He attended frequently, and it was recognized on all hands that in relief business he was a good friend to the poor. He held other local public offices, such as Governor of the Kettering Grammar School, &c., and in addition was County Councillor for the Burton Latimer Division, where he was returned at the first election and again in March this year. The figures on the first occasion were as follows:—

Vernon	...	...	...	...	...	262
Wallis	...	...	...	...	...	257

whilst this year he had an increased majority, the figures being:—

Vernon	...	...	...	...	...	312
Wallis	...	...	...	...	...	257

The death, of course, causes a vacancy on the Northamptonshire County Council. During his connection with the Council he has been an active member, and has done good work on the Cattle and the Allotments Committees to which he was appointed. He was a staunch Conservative and thorough Unionist, and was always willing and ready to assist on behalf of the cause he had at heart in any way he possibly could, but his party predilections did not prevent him from making many friends on the other side. The loss of his aid by those who were working for Lord Burghley in the Northern Division of the county and are helping Mr. Potter in the Eastern Division has been greatly missed. He has always taken a lively interest in promoting the cause in Kettering as well as other parts of the district, and he did a great deal towards the establishment of the Kettering Conservative Club and otherwise creating greater energy and zeal among the workers since their defeat in 1880 and 1885. The rev. gentleman was also a great supporter of the Primrose League and was Ruling Councillor of the Kettering Habitation, Mrs. Vernon being Dame President. His interest in this direction was also of a marked character and his services were greatly appreciated. His able advice on many points will be greatly missed. The villagers of Grafton Underwood have also lost a good friend and adviser, as the deceased gentleman was ever ready to lend a helping hand in distress, and carefully studied the wants and the welfare of his parishioners. He leaves a widow, two sons, and one daughter, wife of the Rev. Hugh Gillett, M.A., Vicar of Compton, in Surrey, to mourn their loss.

It will be remembered that in recent years efforts have been made to raise funds for the restoration of the ancient parish church, in which the deceased gentleman has conducted the services for thirty-seven years. The sacred building is dedicated to St. James, and it is in the Early English, Norman, and Decorated styles with Early English tower and spire containing four bells. There are monuments of Ladies Gertrude and Ann Fitzpatrick, daughters of the Earl of Ossory, and in the churchyard a beautiful Irish Celtic cross over the grave of the late Lord Castletown, uncle of the Rev. and Hon. Courtenay J. Vernon. There is a free school in the parish supported by the Duke of Buccleuch which was built at his expense in 1866. The Duke and the late Rector were the principal landowners.

Kettering Guardian, July 8th, 1892.