

Obituary for Chambre's wife, Emily

MRS. CHAMBREY TOWNSHEND

Mrs. Emily Caroline Townshend, widow of Mr. Chambrey Corker Townshend, died at Ditchling, Sussex, on May 23, in her eighty-fifth year. "G. R. S. T." writes of her:—

It was not chance that decreed that Emily Townshend should have been the first student to register her name, in 1869, at Girton College (as it became in 1873). It was her insatiable intellectual curiosity that made her take that step, and it was that same quality which made her an endless delight to her friends throughout her long life. One can scarcely think of any occupation wherein she could not have excelled; but that unquenchable inquisitiveness never allowed her to loiter with any subject when there were so many other matters equally important awaiting her attention. At college she began working at "Maths" under the guidance of Fletcher Moulton (afterwards Lord Moulton), and in her old age she would tell, with a twinkle, how fascinating a teacher that brilliant young man had been. But she was soon gripped by economics; and there was all that vast aesthetic side of life that had to be investigated. As she herself wrote in the last years of her college days:—"I always wanted to spend my time on the wrong things." Yet the wrong things were always the right ones, and she never wasted a moment of her life.

She knew so many of the best minds of her many days; and had memories of Robert Louis Stevenson, Addington Symonds, William Morris, Freeman the historian, Sidney Colvin, and many others. A particularly close friend was C. P. Scott, of the *Manchester Guardian*, who married her closest Girton friend. When she and her sister, Georgina Gibson, arrived in London, Burne-Jones wrote in a letter that they had brought good taste to town. Then, when the Victorians departed, Mrs. Townshend was there to receive the Cubists when they arrived, with a full understanding of their rather ambiguous intentions. Whenever she passed through Paris she would "do" the most modern galleries; yet equally interested in her elder daughter's windows full of medieval saints or her younger daughter's election to the L.C.C.

She was always the youngest mind in any circle ; and of course was full of political problems ; interested in the Fabian Society (her husband was a first cousin of Miss Payne-Townshend, who is now Mrs. Bernard Shaw) and less sober branches of the Left. Then, during the last few years, she studied Fascism with great enthusiasm, and wrote two books on that subject. Her son-in-law, F. H. Keeling, was killed in the War, and she edited his remarkable " Keeling Letters " ; and her nephew, Thornley Gibson, after two wounds, became Mr. Lloyd George's personal interpreter at Versailles.

Nothing could stop her energy, and there was no end to her desire to know the world and its human inhabitants. Only last Christmas, when a serious fall had threatened her life, she suddenly revived and within a few hours had written to the present writer a letter on the respective merits and disadvantages of Fascism and Communism ; a letter which few could have written in their prime of age and health. Mrs. Townshend was a very rare experience to her friends.

Emily and Isabelle seated on the floor in the front next to each other and dressed in white.



