

TRIBUTE TO A NOBLE CHARACTER.

Fifty-four years ago, Cowbridge and the Vale of Glamorgan, in common with most of the country, experienced one of the most severe snowstorms within living memory. A number of Vale villages became and remained unapproachable for weeks, and how their inhabitants fared for the necessities of life is too long a story to relate here. That storm and exceptionally heavy snowfall brought disasters and troubles galore to a wide area, and indeed all Glamorgan, but it was the occasion of a blessing to Cowbridge and the Vale, for the storm also brought in its wake Dr. Charles Booth Meller, who was destined never to leave afterwards, except for a few days at most, until he left Cowbridge early on the morning of the 29th ult. for Ecclesfield, a large manufacturing town of the West Riding of Yorkshire, his long last home, where the doctor spent his early youth. The storm already referred to, cost the life of Dr. Stannestreet, a popular young doctor who practised with Dr. Phillips, then the Vale's principal doctor, who was killed on the railway near Llanharry station. The doctor was returning from an inquest held at the Colliers' Arms, and having been mistakenly told that the Cowbridge train to Llantrisant and Pontypridd had gone, apparently decided to brave the storm and walk on the railway to his surgery at Llantrisant, as the road was already all but impassible. The train, however, had not gone, and Dr. Stannestreet had not gone much more than a hundred yards before he encountered the train, whose sound the storm drowned. The victim was not discovered until next day, and there was much sorrow in the district. The tragedy deprived Dr. Phillips of a popular assistant, and of course he had to seek another.

DR. MELLER ON THE SCENE.

Dr. Phillips had a number of applicants, among whom was Dr. Meller, a finely-built young man in the twenties, and whom Dr. Phillips invited to an interview, which resulted in an appointment to the young Yorkshire practitioner, who soon attracted attention and confidence by his abilities and promptness. Dr. Meller's connection with Dr. Phillips did not last long, and before the mid-eighties he was practising on his own, and living in the residence where his life of such full service ended on the 25th ult. The range of his services ever extended, and for many years he was the acknowledged doyen of the profession in South Glamorgan, and had more patients on his books than any other rural practitioner in Wales. Dr. Meller was as attentive to and as plain and blunt with rich and poor, as available by night as by day, and rendered skilful services in hundreds of cases where he never expected or had remuneration. To my knowledge for many years he never sent bills for attendance upon ministers or their families, and his reason was that in his opinion churches did not pay a sufficient salary to ministers to enable them to afford the discharge of doctor's bills. His kindness and generosity, though invariably as hidden and uncontentious as possible, were as characteristic as his skill, which was a proverb in the Vale and Cowbridge for half a century and more. He was Medical Officer of Health for more than forty years, and was as attentive to the poorest as to others. For more than thirty years, his periodical reports to the now defunct Bridgend and Cowbridge Board of Guardians were veritable lessons on hygiene, and a joy to hear read at meetings. Many such reports were dry and uninteresting matters enough to tempt some to take a nap, but once Dr. Meller's reports were on the tape, all listened eagerly. Scores of his wonderful instances of skill are extant, and have passed into the lore of the Vale from Porthcawl to Penarth, and from the Severn Sea to the upper reaches of Llantrisant, Llanharan and Peterston-

super-Montem parishes, but I have only space to relate one here. Some thirty years ago, the late Mrs. Mordecai, then the hostess of the White Lion Inn, now de-licensed, became the victim of some internal trouble, and was treated by Dr. Meller. She underwent an operation, experienced some improvement, but Dr. Meller informed her that it was premature to operate further then. Mrs. Mordecai was not the most patient of patients, and made arrangements to enter the Middlesex Hospital, Paddington, there to seek complete relief from her trouble. There she was examined by three surgeons, two of whom immediately left the theatre, while the third remained for a conversation with the patient.

WHERE WAS COWBRIDGE?

The surgeon explained why he and his colleagues had only examined the patient—all that was safe and could be done at that stage of the complaint, had been already done most skilfully. He then asked who had been her surgeon, and Mrs. Mordecai replied: "Dr. Meller, Cowbridge, sir." The surgeon then asked where Cowbridge which he had never heard even mentioned before, was, and was answered that it was a small, but famous, chartered town, with a mayor, in the Vale of Glamorgan. Having made further inquiries and been given further particulars respecting our Vale proud little Utopia, the surgeon observed: "Well, you may and should be proud of your historical grammar school, your mayor, and all that, but you should be proudest of all of that Dr. Meller, who should be here, and whom we must induce to come here, where we have to treat many cases similar to yours. Go home to-morrow, put yourself again under the care of Dr. Meller, and give him my compliments and best wishes." There was no wonder the late doctor and surgeon became the half idol of Mrs. Mordecai's as he did of so many others during his long, honourable and altruistical sojourn among them. Cowbridge and

the Vale were already under a deep gloom of sorrow on account of the death of our late beloved King on January 20th, and the widely regretted death of Dr. Meller five days later deepened the gloom in no small measure, for the district for many miles around will perhaps never have his like among the people. He loved his profession intensely, devoted his whole soul to it, and kept well abreast of it to the end. He had but two hobbies—good horses and flowers. I do not know whether in late years he had discarded horses for motor-cars, but if he had, I know it was a wrench for him to part with horses. While traversing the Vale, he fancied many a colt, and bought it when it became a three-year-old, and many a farmer will tell you to-day that he never begrudged paying a good price. He doted on flowers, and his fine residence, gardens and environments were perpetual delights to see. For at least forty years, he was a liberal donor of flowers to all functions, public and private, chapel and church, in all the countryside. While I lived near Dr. Meller, and after, Dr. Meller was a bachelor, and I had almost forgotten to add that later in life he married a lady doctor, who, with four daughters, survive him. Like Queen Mary, it is hoped that Mrs. Dr. Meller and her daughters will derive consolation and strength from the fact that so many, far and near, sincerely partake in their sorrow and irreparable loss. Mrs. Dr. Meller has practised in the area for years, and fully shared the confidence always so safely reposed in her husband. Like other doctors I have had the privilege to know, Dr. Meller could have applied the saintly Dr. Lister's words to himself, and have said: "I have aspired to no worldly positions and honours, which I deem dirt in comparison with ameliorating human pain and misery." He will be gratefully and affectionately remembered while any of his thousands of patients survive.