

# OBITUARY

## Mr. H. W. Nevinson

Henry Woodd Nevinson, the distinguished journalist (whose death is announced on another page), was born in Leicester in 1856. He grew up, among brothers and sisters, in a bourgeois family, respectable, exclusive, moderate in means, conservative, cultivated, God-fearing, acquainted with no literature but the Bible, and no serious subject but Evangelical religion. He went to Shrewsbury, which gave him an enduring love of the classics and of the Severn. From Shrewsbury he went up to Christ Church, Oxford, and also studied at Jena. Enthusiasm for Carlyle made him join the Social Democratic Federation, as one of its earliest members, and live in the East End, for several years teaching Greek, German, and military drill at Toynbee Hall. Escape from teaching—always to him uncongenial—was provided by his appointment as secretary to the London Playing Fields Committee, a half-time job, which left him leisure to write his "Life of Schiller" (1889) and two volumes of sketches, which won him distinction as a writer of rare quality.

In 1894 came (as he wrote later) "one of the happiest events in an existence which, on the whole, has been happy"—his first visit to Greece, a country which thrilled him. "Who would not fight for such a land?" In 1897 his chance came, and he at once seized it. Volunteering for Greece brought with it another opportunity, which "in less than sixty seconds changed the whole course of my life."



H. W. Massingham was then editor of the "Daily Chronicle," and he asked Nevinson to write letters from the front. As "Daily Chronicle" correspondent he went to Crete in 1897, to Spain in 1898, and to South Africa, where he remained from 1898 to 1902, sharing all the horrors of the siege of Ladysmith, and knowing, when he came back, that he had seen the end of an epoch.

He next went out to Greece as secretary of the Macedonian Relief Committee. Meantime "The Plea of Pan" (1901) and "Between the Acts" (1903) had won him fame. He found himself in "danger of becoming a literary man," but was "saved" by an invitation from "Harper's" in the United States to undertake an "adventurous journey" of his own choosing. He chose to go to Central Africa—Angola and the cocoa islands of San Thome and Principe. The result of that journey was his revelations in "A Modern Slavery" (1906). He went at the request of his friend Robert Donald, who had become editor of the "Daily Chronicle," to investigate the revolution in Russia, which he described in his unforgettable "The Dawn in Russia" (1906). The "Nation" had now been founded and for sixteen years, from 1907 to 1923, he wrote an article every week—except when he was away at the ends of the earth—for Massingham, to whom he dedicated "More Changes, More Chances," the second of his three volumes of autobiography. In the autumn of 1907 he went to India for the "Manchester Guardian," and from that time onwards C. P. Scott gave him the opportunities for the great journalistic writing of which he was master.

Heart and soul with the women in the suffrage fight, Nevinson fought against some of his best friends, without alienating any of them; it was, indeed, his sense of the generosity with which Ramsay MacDonald accepted and understood his attitude that finally brought him into definite association with the Labour party. Before that happened, however, he had once more been called upon with the outbreak of the Great War to act as war correspondent. For the "Manchester Guardian" he went first to the Western Front, then to the Dardanelles (where he was wounded by a shell splinter), Salonika, and to Versailles for the treaty-making. "The Dardanelles Campaign," published in 1918, will stand with his "Essays in Freedom" and "Essays in Rebellion" among his finest work; beside it belong "Lines of Life" (1920), called by him merely "a book of verse," and "Original Sinners" (1920), a gallery of portraits of brilliant draughtsmanship. Again for the "Manchester Guardian" he went to the Washington Conference of 1921-2, and to Germany during the Ruhr occupation. In 1926 he paid one of his many visits to Palestine, and in 1929 made his twelfth visit to the Near East. He continued his literary activity in later years. In 1931 he published a critical study of Goethe, as "man and poet"; "Running Accompaniments," a volume of essays and observations, in 1936; and two years ago a book of fantasy with the title "Films of Time." His last work—a book of criticism and reminiscences with Thomas Hardy as the subject—is published this month. He was president of the London P.E.N. Club in 1938, and since 1939 he had been president of the National Council for Civil Liberties. Christ Church, his old college, elected him to an honorary studentship (equivalent to a Fellowship) last year.

He was married twice, first to Margaret Wynne Jones (C. R. W. Nevinson, the artist, is their son) and secondly to Evelyn Sharp, the well-known writer.