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DEATH OF MR. JAMES REYNOLDS

Our obituary last week will be found to contain a record of the decease of the above-named gentleman, who expired on the 24th of March, at his residence, 20, Maids'-causeway, in the 73rd year of his age, after a brief illness, having been confined to his bed but two days. The subject of our memoir was born on April 5th, 1795, at Fenstanton, in which village he resided until he reached man's estate. For some time he was engaged as a gamekeeper, an occupation suited to his taste and habits, for he was passionately fond of the sports of the field. Though not of large stature he was no mean athlete. Compact in form, at running and jumping he had few equals and in his neighbourhood none superior. With his love of sport he also possessed a strong attachment for the occupation of driving a "Four-in-hand," and he made his first "debut" on the road, under the mentorship and guidance of old John Nicols, or, as he was more familiarly termed, Old Nic, driver of the Stamford coach, running daily between that town and Cambridge. The hints given by his worthy mentor he did not fail to profit by, and he longed to exercise professionally his skill in the calling of a coachman. An opportunity was soon afforded him, for in 1821 he was appointed to drive the "Safety" coach which ran from the Rose Inn, Cambridge, to the Bull Inn, Aldgate-street, London. This coach he continued to drive upwards of two years, when an arrangement having been effected by the proprietors the "Safety" was discontinued, and his services were transferred to the "Sovereign," which ran from London to Birmingham, through Oxford and Leamington. For about eight months Reynolds drove this coach, when he was offered the "Telegraph" from Cambridge to London. This offer he gladly accepted to the great regret of the proprietors of the "Sovereign," who, to show their appreciation of his skill as a whip and his worth as a man, offered him the best coach they had upon the road.

In 1823 or the beginning of 1824 he commenced with the "Telegraph," driving up to Wadesmill and returning back to Cambridge in the day. In 1828 this arrangement was altered, and he drove through to London, returning the next day, and this arrangement was continued until that innovator of modern times – the rail – was opened to Cambridge in 1845, and the occupation of our friend was gone: -

"No longer now with spirits gay,
They mount the box and dash away ;
For steam hath banish'd from the land
The once gay, dashing Four-in-hand.
Alas ! their occupation 's gone,
No coach ! no guard ! no whip ! no horn!"

Mr James Reynolds, or as he was more generally called, Jem Reynolds, obtained considerable celebrity as a driver. His skill in handling of the ribbons was remarkable, for he possessed a delicacy of touch which few of his coaching brethren could boast of. He was a steady, careful man, an excellent judge of pace, and throughout the whole of his career as a coachmen he never met with an accident. He once drove the "Telegraph" coach from the White Horse, Fetter-lane, London, in four hours and twelve minutes, having received orders from the head-quarters to perform the

distance as quickly as possible, in consequence of the opposition. This feat is without parallel, we believe, in the annals of Cambridge coaching.

As a coachmen Reynolds was kind and courteous to all, without being subservient to any, and when driving it was always a treat to an amateur to see the graceful style in which he would throw out the whip to the heads of his leaders, and with a turn of his wrist catch the lash and double-thong his wheelers: -

“To all the young Cantabs how great was the treat,
To see Reynolds the ‘Telegraph’ drive through the street ;
How neatly his wheelers he would double-thong,
And thoroughbred leaders send dashing along.
The Baronet now would the “Telegraph” drive,
And the style of Jem Reynolds to emulate strive ;
For coaching just then, sir, it was all the rage,
And Corinthian swells tool’d the fast “Brighton Age.”

During the time he was driver of the “Telegraph,” Reynolds became much attached to dramatic representations, and was a frequent visitor to the London theatres, especially the major houses, in whose companies at that time was to be seen a combination of talent rarely, if ever equalled. The efforts of Macready, Young, and of others inspired him with a passionate yearning for acting, and he longed to strut and fret his hour upon the mimic stage, a longing which he soon gratified. In an ode upon the “Cambridge Dragsmen” of this period, by a late Fellow of King’s College, this passion is thus alluded to: -

“Jem Reynolds on the box always *acts* genteely,
Now wants to act the fool with Liston, Power, and Keeley.”

Reynolds, however, by careful study and by his natural aptness, obtained considerable excellence as an amateur. Apart from his profession, the stage was his great desideratum. He was firmly persuaded of the advantages which flow from a well-directed theatre, and was fully impressed with the benefits resulting from amateur dramatic representations. In 1830, in conjunction with the late Weston Hatfield, W.H.Smith, and others, he founded the Shakespeare Club. With this club he continued playing for some years, and in 1836, he joined the Garrick Club with which society he remained a playing member until its dissolution in 1842. In the parts of *Pierre*, *Iago*, *Shylock*, *San Pierre*, *Don Felix*, *Claude Melnotte*, *Rover*, *Wildrake*, *Duke Aranza*, *Mr Simpson*, *Adam Brock*, *Stolbach* and others of that class, he was one of the best amateurs it was ever our lot to witness. There was a gracefulness of deportment, a sweetness of elocution, not lacking force when force was required, and propriety of gesture and action that was seldom met with in an amateur. Several times Reynolds played with the regular company, appearing as *Pierre*, *Iago*, *Shylock*, and *Sir John de Comyn*. His last appearance on the boards of the Cambridge theatre was in the part of *Julian St.Pierre*, on January 6th, 1858, with the members of the Cambridge Amateur Theatrical Society.

The accomplishments of Reynolds, both physically and mentally, were numerous; those who have only known him in the latter period of his existence, when his days were passing into the “sere and yellow leaf,” would hardly credit the agility he possessed. He was remarkably swift of

foot ; and one evening, after an exhibition of his pedestrian powers on Parker's Piece, by which he was a considerable winner, over a convivial glass a witty and eccentric friend said – "Jem, I would write your epitaph, but your accomplishments are so numerous that I should hardly know where to begin and where to end." "I am afraid," answered Reynolds, "you would flatter me too much, but if you do it, I pray you 'nothing extenuate,' but I need not finish the quotation, for there is nothing like malice in your composition." On his next return journey, Reynolds received the following lines, as near as we can remember, writing from memory : -

"Reader, pause o'er this tomb, and 'ere thou departest,
Know 'tis Jem Reynolds – nor Sir Joshua, the artist –
The man so renowned for his "Telegraph" driving,
That none could surpass him, dead or surviving.
He was the beau of the road and the pride of the fair,
Sat his box with a grace that was quite *debonair*.
By nature created bold, active, and strong,
In a foot-race or leap he was first in the throng.
He could skate like a fenman, a somersault fling,
And was a cack shot at a bird on the wing.
He would ride like a Nimrod, like a Payton could drive,
He could swim like Leander, like a pearl-hunter dive ;
Act Iago and *Shylock*, like Incledon sing ;
He could fence with old Angelo, or box with Tom Spring.
He could dance the gavotte, too, with ariel grace,
Like Proteus could change, but was always in place ;
Lords, Dons and Doctors, all the choice spirits,
Acknowledg'd his worth and rewarded its merits ;
Integrity, candour, and truth stamp'd the *man*,
And he honour'd the like, deny it who can."

On his final retirement from the road, having been a careful thrifty man, though not lacking in generosity, he was enabled to take a quiet box in the village of Trumpington, and here for some years he kept his favourite hunter, and was constantly to be seen with the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk hounds whenever the meets were within distance. Hunting was an outdoor amusement which, while his strength permitted him to follow, he revelled in ; and many have been the times we have listened with pleasure to hear him relate a gallant run, and to see his manly face beam with delight in telling it. From the find to the finish he was always at home, and nothing gave him greater delight than to see hounds well spread over a covert :

"See ! how they range
Dispersed ; how busily this way and that
They cross, examining with curious nose
Each likely haunt. Hark ! on the drag I hear
Their doubtful notes precluding to a cry,
More nobly full and swell'd with every mouth."

In 1858, through his advance of years, and the infirmities of age coming fast upon him, he was reluctantly compelled to forego the pleasures of the chase, to give up the

“Delightful scene !
Where all around is gay ; men,horses, dogs ;
And in each smiling countenance appears
Fresh blooming health, and universal joy.”

He parted with his hunter, and returned to the “old house at home” on the Causeway. Here he passed his time in the company of his friends and his books, to the collecting of which he devoted both time and money, not with a view of advantage to himself but for the purpose of promoting the intellectuality of his fellow-townsmen. In this year he became a benefactor to the Free Library, and up to the time of his death his thoughts and deeds were for its prosperity. Every year he added largely to the Library, until his donations amounted to 2,720 volumes, a large – very large – number to constitute the gift of one individual.

On Monday, March 30th, his remains were interred in a vault at the cemetery on the Mill-road, and they were followed to their last resting place, by numerous friends and by the committee of the Free Library, to whose members he was so well known. In his departure from this world he forgot not the principles upon which he had always acted, nor did he fail to exemplify that generosity and liberalness of heart, which was one of his main characteristics. We can speak confidently and proudly of the many acts of charity which he performed, but the “crowning mercy” was left till he shuffled off his mortal coil. “By the public have I lived,” he used to say, “and to the public will I bequeath most of that which I have accumulated in my passage through the world.” This he has most nobly done, for the Albert Asylum will be benefited some thousands by his death, the Hospital £500, and the Free Library, £200. Neither has he forgotten those of his household, for to each of his servants he has bequeathed a competency as a reward for the unremitting kindness and attention they have ever showed him.

“After life’s fitful dream he sleeps well.”
