

TISSINGTON TATLOW

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THE election of Canon Tatlow to the Presidency of the Institute of Education will have given profound satisfaction to everyone who knows the history of the Church during the present century. It is the first time in a long life that he has been placed actually at the head of an important institution. His work has always been that of a secretary, doing the thinking and the administrative work. There, among the men of our time, he is almost unique in his ability and success.

It is quite impossible in a single article to appraise either his personality or his work; that task would need a considerable volume. He is an Irishman, with a vision rather like that of his friend John R. Mott, a vision of a whole world first evangelized and then won to Christ. But for the doctors he would have gone to the foreign field soon after completing his college training. Thus hindered (like St Paul on a famous occasion) from carrying out his original intention, he devoted himself to another country which was even then showing signs of developing into that pagan condition with which we are so familiar today. His point of attack was, inevitably, the educated and cultured mind which must lead a nation or, indeed, a civilization. There are still some living who knew him as the secretary of the B.C.C.U., soon renamed the S.C.M. Under both titles it had strong missionary interests, and included the S.V.M.U.

Here T. (it seems impossible to call him anything else) remained, apparently endowed with the gift of perennial youth, never failing to enter into the feelings and attitude of the student community of the British Isles, and, indeed, of the wider world. But at length he turned away from the student to the teacher. There was already in existence an organization known as the Association of Teachers of Religious Knowledge, and this he transformed into the now familiar Institute of Christian Education. For many of its years he has been its

General Director, and now he has followed the late Archbishop Temple and Sir Walter Moberley in the presidential chair.

This brief summary is enough to illustrate the most obvious of T.'s many great qualities, his statesmanship. He can appreciate a situation and see what needs to be done in order to achieve in it the results he has in view, though these results may not be fully realized for generations to come. But he also has, what some people with the statesman's mind have lacked, the capacity for dealing with people. He has never failed to choose the right men for any particular tasks he has had in view, and (more striking still) he has nearly always secured their interest and their services. It is the more remarkable that people seldom if ever heard from him the traditional Irish eloquence; he once told a group representing a Celtic nation that he was not an Englishman, but he was a realist. It was by the plain and straightforward statement of a position that he won his way.

He usually did win his way. But there was no sense of an imposed force; he had the gift of making people accept his views and leaving them with the impression that they had invented them for themselves. Not a few people would probably agree that he came very near to being the ideal chairman of a committee; that opinion would certainly be endorsed by anyone who had served on the S.C.M. executive.

In choosing his workers, and, indeed, in all his activities, he seemed almost to ignore denominational differences. He himself was, of course, a good Churchman, but in the practical task he had before him he was ready to meet on level terms and to work happily with men and women of any Christian body. The Churches of this country have not yet attained to reunion, but the old hostilities have very largely died out, and many of us feel that if the new spirit of co-operation and mutual respect is maintained, actual reunion will in time become automatic. There can be little doubt that this truer Christian spirit and this happier outlook owes more to the organizations which T. has directed than to any one other influence.

In spite of his apparently matter-of-fact approach to people and things, T. has always had an amazing capacity for making

friends. It is impossible to know him without loving him, and the lapse of years, and even long periods of absence, make no difference to his friendships. He has a real gift for sympathy; no small part of his efficiency lies in his power of entering into the point of view and the feelings of those with whom he works.

Above all, those who know T. best are conscious of an unobtrusive but very deep and sincere spiritual life. Of this it is difficult to speak at all, and, in the nature of the case, adequate appreciation is impossible. But the rest of us know that in him we have had a leader wholly consecrated in mind and spirit to the cause of Christ and His Kingdom.

A Short Bible, arranged by Austin Farrer from the Authorized Version (pp. 190. Fontana Books, 2s. 6d.) is a welcome addition to the series which already includes J. P. Phillips' 'Letters to Young Churches' and 'Making Men Whole', C. S. Lewis' 'Screwtape Letters' and 'Mere Christianity', and Father Gerald Vann's 'The Divine Pity'. Few people nowadays read the Bible regularly and systematically. Most of those who know and use it would find difficulty, if challenged, in summing up its purpose and message. The majority of the population neither read it nor care about it, and if they were persuaded to read it would hardly know where to begin. Dr Farrer's preface is arresting and incisive. 'The unity of the Bible', he says, 'can best be appreciated from within; we must plunge in somewhere. Let it be into the Epistle to the Galatians.' He points out that the Old Testament was the Bible of Christ and of Paul. His selections from it are determined by the fact that they are 'the background to the New Testament mind'. He intersperses the books of Moses with connecting passages from Acts and Psalms, and the Prophets with others from Acts and Ecclesiasticus. Luke, in its entirety, tells the gospel story and the narrative is continued through the early part of Acts: discourses from Matthew and John are added. Mark does not appear. Galatians and I Corinthians alone of the Epistles are included and there is a page from Revelation. Is this too drastic? The answer is that it fulfils its vital purpose—and that Dr Farrer vindicates a principle which compilers of Agreed Syllabuses and G.C.E. Syllabuses, as well as teachers making their schemes of work, may well find very relevant.