

## OBITUARY

### ROBERT WHITELAW.

ROBERT WHITELAW was born in 1843, and went up to Trinity, Cambridge, with an open scholarship in 1861; was Craven scholar in 1864, senior classic in 1865 (three years after Jebb), first Chancellor's Medallist the same year, Fellow of his College in 1866. Then Dr. Temple carried him off to Rugby, and he married next year. In 1870 he began to teach the 'Twenty' (the form below the Sixth), and continued to do so till his retirement in 1913. In a letter of thanks for a present from his old pupils, he spoke of them as 'my friends of the Twenty who march before me in a procession forty-four years long.' When he retired in 1913 he was in his full vigour. In his own modest words, 'If I might begin again, I almost believe I could do now some useful work.' He is best known by his *Sophocles in English Verse*, dedicated to Robert Browning in 1883. Jebb's first edition of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* appeared that year. Whitelaw's *Notes on the Oedipus Rex* were published in 1886, and carefully considered by Jebb. He reviewed Jebb's second edition in this magazine (1888, p. 74), to which between 1888 and 1902 he contributed a number of reviews and papers. In his translations his unrhymed choruses after the model of *Merope* did not find so much favour as his exquisite blank verse, which reflected the 'flawless perfection' of the original. He was never ornate, and there are no purple patches, but there is a *σωφροσύνη* and a dignity which are truly Greek in everything he wrote. He also translated the *Prometheus Bound*: lines 88-92 well illustrate his style:

Bright empyrean, and ye winged winds,  
Fountains of rivers, and the uncounted smile  
Of the ocean-waves, and Earth, mother of all,  
And the Sun's orb all-seeing I invoke.  
See me tormented by the gods, a god!

It is much to be hoped that, even if his privately printed versions of the *Sixth Aeneid* and *Eclogues* are not made public, there will be a volume of his compositions. He must have translated much of *In Memoriam* into elegiacs; and his versions of 'When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes' Burns' 'Lines to a Field Mouse' or Blanco White's sonnet deserve to be known. His teaching led him to compose more in Latin than in Greek, but his real interest lay in Greek Drama and Greek Syntax. The Sixth in 'Tutor' found him a magnificent teacher of grammar. His Greek Testament lessons were wonderful; we had to copy out our rough notes and he revised them. For a specimen of his teaching one may refer to the fourth volume of this magazine. He was a great teacher and a man of lofty character. Formidable at times, but always just, he got the best work out of his form of which they were capable; and his boarding-house, with the efficient help of his wife, he made a happy and harmonious family, in which he cared for the backward and wayward as much as for the promising and docile. His combination of accurate scholarship, poetic taste, and wide knowledge of literature and history, made him one of the most successful schoolmasters of the nineteenth century. Rugby may well be grateful for such a man's life-work, which will not easily be forgotten.

G. C. RICHARDS.