

OBITUARY NOTICE

William Harrison Moreland

OB. 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1938

Moreland was born in Northern Ireland in 1868 and was a scholar and exhibitor at Clifton College from 1881 to 1886, when he passed into the I.C.S. He spent his period of probation at Trinity College, Cambridge, taking a first in the Law Tripos and obtaining the degree of LL.B. in 1889 when he proceeded to India. After a few years in district work he became assistant settlement officer at Unao, and on the death of the settlement officer finished the work of assessment and wrote an admirable final report (1896). Increasing deafness disabled him from ordinary duties and undoubtedly prevented his rising to the highest posts in the service, but his abilities and experience marked him out for the post of Director of Land Records and Agriculture, which he held with conspicuous merit for twelve years. During this period he had to deal with the important questions of simplifying the systems of land records and settlement of land revenue, the improvement of the training of *qānūngos*, and the transformation of the agricultural school at Cawnpore into a college with a staff of experts new to the country and suspicious of the head of a department with no specialized scientific training. Moreland was, however, a student all his life, and his official reports on a variety of topics showed his grasp of facts and the results of continual study of economic theory. It is sufficient to quote here the eulogy of his services in Sir John Hewett's resolution on the famine of 1907-8 in the United Provinces: ". . . much valuable information embodied in this resolution has been supplied by Mr. Moreland, whose long study and mature judgment of the economic conditions of the United Provinces has been of the greatest assistance to the Lieutenant-Governor throughout the past year." During a visit to Australia he selected varieties of wheat which were resistant to attacks of rust, and one of these became the most valuable strain in the

province. For his official services he was made C.I.E. in 1905 and C.S.I. in 1912.

While in India he published a book on the agriculture of the U.P. (1904), intended for officials and landholders, and a short history of the Revenue Administration (1911), both of which were of great service to the classes for whom they were designed, and were translated into the vernacular. In 1913 appeared *An Introduction to Economics for Indian Students*, in the preface of which he noted: "I have been forced by experience to realize that to a large proportion of Indian students of Economics the subject is abstract and bears little relation to the facts of Indian life." This comment will be appreciated by all who know how the subject was being taught in Indian Universities thirty years ago.

Moreland retired in 1914, having spent all his service in the United Provinces, where he had many friends attracted by his high character and abilities. He then passed two years as Agricultural Adviser in Central India. On his return to England he set about the study of the economic history of India in the seventeenth century, the earliest period for which original authorities are abundant. This involved acquiring a knowledge of Persian, Dutch, and Portuguese. He soon realized that existing translations from the Persian had been made by literary scholars who had no knowledge of revenue business and had not always mastered the specialized terminology of the period. In a series of preliminary studies in this journal and elsewhere he put forward revised theories. The first complete production was *India at the death of Akbar* (1920), followed by *India from Akbar to Aurangzeb* (1923). These books have filled notable gaps in the written histories of India and are particularly valuable for their use of the Dutch records, which were practically unknown in India and in this country. As noted in the reviews of them in this *Journal* (1920, p. 380, and 1924, p. 684) they are marked by skill in the selection of material, clarity, and attractiveness of exposition, and frankness in admitting difficulties and the

possibility of other interpretations. A later and more difficult work of this character was *The Agrarian System of Moslem India* (1929), which involved study of the earlier records as it opens with the thirteenth century. As an example of his extreme care to be accurate, he personally examined fifteen manuscripts of the *Ain-i-Akbari* to elucidate a single section. Finally, in 1936, in collaboration with Sir A. C. Chatterjee, he published *A Short History of India*, which deals with the development of culture and economic history, including just sufficient of the political events to link these together.

In addition to these comprehensive studies he also edited a number of original descriptions of conditions in India or travels, viz. *Jahangir's India* (with Professor Geyl), a translation from the Dutch of Pelsaert (1925), and for the Hakluyt Society, *Relations of Golconda* (1931), and *Peter Floris: His Voyage to the East Indies in the Globe* (1934), and he contributed a number of papers to various journals, all bringing out some new view on Indian topics. Many students in India, in Holland, and in this country are grateful for his full assistance to those who sought his help.

While at Cambridge Moreland ran for the University in the cross-country contest with Oxford. As Director he taught his young *qānūngos* to play hockey and football, a task that would have seemed impossible forty years ago. For many years after his retirement his short annual holiday was spent walking 30 miles a day in country where there was no danger from motors. His many friends valued his correspondence, a letter on a serious subject generally ending with a flash of humour. Only three days before his sudden death he wrote apropos of a book he proposed to edit for the Hakluyt Society: "The traveller Struys turned up, and I am now considering whether at 70 +. I am justified in committing myself to 400 quarto pages of black letter, with notes ranging from Russia to Java. . . . I suppose I must take it on; it looks like a lifer."