

Robert Abraham

the whole of that time, until taken down on Thursday the 12th October — *Worcester Chronicle*

THE TRANSCRIPT

HAVING THE

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MONTREAL TRANSCRIPT.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1854.

It is our melancholy task to record to-day the death of one whose mind has, for the last four years, directed the course of this journal; and whose name, as connected with journalism in Canada, has become as familiar as a household word to thousands.

Robert Abraham died on Friday night last, and with him departed a store of mental gifts, and honest, kindly thoughts, and deep-seated affections, long to be missed and mourned in the wide circle illuminated by his genius and warmed by his fine, manly nature. Placed, as we have been, for many years in close relationship with Robert Abraham,—meeting him, day after day, and knowing every point of his character,—we feel totally inadequate to fulfil the task of his biographer. The hackneyed expressions of ordinary regret, the dull, stupid tribute of common praise, seem like an insult when offered at the shrine of one who would have brought to a like task such rare gifts. But the duty is there, and, though most painful, we will endeavour to fulfil it.

Mr. Abraham was a native of Cumberland; and there, as here, the tidings of his death will fall as a heavy load upon a large circle of admiring friends. It is only a short time since that a gentleman, who had just visited the north of England, was describing to us the interest exhibited by the quiet citizens of Whitehaven in the welfare of one who had then been for many years a stranger to them. Enquiries of Robert Abraham met him at every turn. The recollection was of a young man who had gone up to London about the time of the Reform Bill, and from whose genius and impetuous zeal great things had been expected. To them he was one of the lights of the north, and they only wondered that the light had not been more distinctly visible in the great political world into which it had plunged. They, good souls! did not calculate all the cost of the struggle, or know how few reach on the ladder of Fame that high step which they assigned to their young favorite; and for the occupation of which, all who knew him will admit, Mr. Abraham possessed many marked and rare qualifications.

But we are anticipating the course of events. Though a journalist by choice, Mr. Abraham was originally educated for the medical profession—pursued his studies at Edinburgh—passed the College of Surgeons; and, for a short time, we believe, practiced as a medical man in England. But his literary tastes were too strong to be controlled. It was a period of great political excitement—the fierce struggle which preceded the passing of the Reform Bill was at its height—and in the County of Cumberland, one great family interest—the Lowther family—quelled all before it. To counteract this influence, a number of gentlemen started a newspaper at Whitehaven—the *Whitehaven Herald*, we believe,—and of this paper, Robert Abraham was appointed the Editor. Those who knew the strength of the man in his later years, when his powers had already somewhat declined, can best imagine how powerful an influence he must have exercised with his pen in the high day of his vigor and youth. And that he did exercise this influence, we have heard others attest. This was to him, doubtless, the happiest period of his life. He was fond of society—fond of rustic walks—fond of antiquities—and was noticed, petted, and admired. Fame seemed to beckon him on in the distance, and if she eluded his grasp at last, and left him somewhat jaded and worn on this Canadian continent,—how many others as gifted and true, has she not dealt with likewise, and is not this the history of genius from the beginning?

We cannot say, precisely, the time at which Robert Abraham left Whitehaven. It was, as we have intimated, somewhere about the time of the passing of the Reform Bill. There was then some time passed in London, and then he settled down as Editor of the *Liverpool Journal*. In Liverpool, as in Whitehaven, he soon gathered round him a host of admiring friends, and became remarkable for the vigour and character of his writings. In 1842, his first connection with Canada commenced. The then proprietors of the *Montreal Gazette* required some articles on commercial topics from the old country, and Mr. Abraham was engaged to furnish them. Commercial articles, excepting always those of the leading London Journals, are not calculated to gain a writer much fame; but the articles furnished by Mr. Abraham soon attracted attention, and were the admiration of all competent judges. The result of this connexion was, that in the summer of 1844, Mr. Abraham became the purchaser, and assumed the management of the *Montreal Gazette*. His labours whilst thus engaged will not be forgotten—more particularly, his noble defence of Lord Metcalfe, when that high-minded and lamented nobleman was deserted by the radical members of his "would be everything" administration. For, as a cotemporary has justly remarked, though a liberal himself by education and reflection, Robert Abraham soon found himself—such is the fierce democratic element which is constantly being invoked—forced into the position of a Canadian Conservative. Therefore, during his connexion with the *Gazette*, as afterwards with the *Transcript*, that journal was the staunch advocate of Liberal Conservative views—liberal in according and securing to all men their reasonable constitutional liberties—conservative in curbing innovation, as to preserve intact the connection of the Colony with the mother country.

In 1848, Mr. Abraham, who found, probably, the position of a Canadian newspaper proprietor more irksome than he had expected, resigned his connexion with the *Gazette*, and a twelvemonth afterwards, was induced to assume the charge of this journal, and continued, as our readers are aware, its senior Editor up to the time of his death. During the year's interregnum, Mr. Abraham passed his examination as an advocate, and wrote a very elaborate and learned, and, everything considered, remarkable treatise on "Feudal Tenure," a subject to which, shortly after his arrival in this country, he had turned his attention.

Of his connexion with the *Transcript*, it is unnecessary to speak. As a political writer, he was, it is not saying too much, almost without an equal. It was almost impossible to find him at fault. He was intimately acquainted with the history of all political events, and seemed—such was his varied knowledge—to have exhausted all literary treasures. His language was bold Saxon English—pure and undefiled. Nor was his knowledge confined to politics and literature proper. Take him on a scientific subject, and it was the same. Some thought this universality of knowledge must come by intuition; but Robert Abraham had earned what he knew—as all must earn like knowledge—by application and perseverance. He had been an industrious student, and the treasures he so lavishly scattered around him in advanced life, had been painfully amassed during his earlier years. Of course, he had great natural endowments; you had only to look at that bold Saxon front, to be assured that there were cells within large enough to contain no ordinary stores of learning. Then his body was stoutly built, and the physical man supported the mental man well. Even two years of painful illness could hardly subdue that well-knit, powerful frame, and death only beat the strong man by inches.

But it is not alone as a clever writer that Robert Abraham will be remembered. He was one of the kindest-hearted and most affectionate of beings. We do not believe it was in his composition to hurt mortal man. Then there was a fine vein of chivalry running through his nature. He was the soul of honor and of truth. Meanness he abhorred. His estimate of what a gentleman should be, would, we fear, seem extravagant to ordinary men; but what he said, he felt. He never deserted a friend. His vocation of editor, was exercised with all gentleness and kindness. His wrath was hard to rouse, but when it came,

it was tremendous; and those who felt its force, never forgot it. For the last two years, his health gradually failed; and for the last two months the inevitable result was as plainly evident to his friends as it was to him. He met the final stroke with the fortitude and resignation which are to be expected from a man of his character, and his last moments were as peaceful as those of a sleeping child. His thoughts, at the last, wandered among green fields; and "beds of hyacinths" cheated his imagination down the dark path which leads through the valley of the shadow of death. And so he died—a gifted, high-minded, honest man.—Peace be to his ashes.