

HWP

REGINALD L. HINE

FSA - FRHistS

An uncommon attorney

THROUGH A LAWYER'S WINDOW

By REGINALD COLBY

ONE is always hearing that so-and-so, a writer or a painter, was born before or after his time and that his work suffered in consequence, so what a relief it is for once in a while to find a man who was not only born at the right time but in the right place, too.

Reginald Hine was born at Baldock, nine miles from Hitchin, in 1883. That is to say, he was seventeen at the turn of the century when his young observant eyes first began to absorb the peculiarities and the well-ordered, sturdy life of the old country town and Royal Manor of Hitchin—a place as typically English as the foaming beer its Quakers had brewed for centuries, and the sweet-scented lavender which came drifting over the town on hot July days from the surrounding fields, where it was cultivated like wheat—broad fields of blue, alas, no more.

During the first twenty years of the new century Hitchin remained much the same as it had been during the preceding two hundred years, and Reginald Hine was able to steep himself in its old-world Quaker atmosphere. Then after the first World War he saw it gradually transform itself into the mixture of old and new which it is to-day. The old Quaker families gradually died out, the Queen Anne houses where they had lived for generations changed hands and were divided up into flats, modern stores took the place of the old-fashioned, gossipy shops, the old family banks were bought up, and the Quakers no longer brewed the local beer.

However, right up to the beginning of the second World War and even later members of the old Quaker families lingered on in Hitchin—sons and daughters of old townsfolk who had travelled up to London, not on the "new" railway, but by Kershaw's coach, which would take an outside passenger up to the metropolis and back for the cheap rate of 2s. 6d.

Reginald Hine listened to their talk as he sat with them on their sunny verandas or walked with them in their walled-in gardens, about Hitchin and its characters—"worthies," as he likes to call them. Amassing all this knowledge about the past, he became the town's unofficial local historian. All his books have Hitchin, at least Hertfordshire, for their background, except for a vivacious account of John Bunyan's iron violin. But then Bunyan was almost a Quaker and he lived only just over the "border" in Bedfordshire.

HINE'S death last year at the age of sixty-seven, with so much of his knowledge still locked away in his versatile brain, was a great loss. For, as Mildred Bozman tells us in her foreword to Hine's *Relics of an Un-common Attorney* (Dent, 18s.), he was settling down to write a history of Hertfordshire which would have set the seal on his career of "Chronicler of the Parish" and local historian.

A solicitor's office, stacked from basement to attic with family records and with its tentacles spreading through the town, makes an admirable centre for absorbing masses of local information. From this vantage point Hine came to know the history and antecedents of every old family in Hitchin, and half the residents by sight. And added to these advantages he also had a genius for discovering old records, account books and yellowing diaries on his book-collecting jaunts, and it is these which give the necessary authoritative ring to his writings, but never obscure their human side.

Not a Quaker himself either by birth or religion, he always showed great sympathy for these magnanimous, long-suffering and upright people.

In his chapter, "Quakerism in Hertfordshire," he has some very fine words to say about local Quakers and helps to repay a little of the debt which Hitchin and other Hertfordshire towns owe to the Society of Friends:

At Hitchin we are wont to say that the whole town, in the eighteenth century, was brought up in the leading strings of the Quakers. When the natural fathers of the parish, the wardens, the overseers, the surveyors of the highways forsook their duties, then



Reginald Hine at work. Listening to the talk of Hitchin's "worthies" impelled him to become the town's unofficial historian.

the Quakers would take it up. All the forlorn hopes, the unpleasant jobs, the worst parts of the road, the cleaning out of the river, the disinfecting of the pest-house, were handed over to them.

The Quakers of Hitchin would be the last to deny that they owed their prosperity to the town, by banking, brewing and farming, but, as Mr. Hine points out, they never shirked their responsibilities to the community.

THERE was one occasion, however, when their duty to the community and the duty to their consciences posed a problem which these inflexible pacifists found very difficult to solve. It was at the time of the Napoleonic wars, when England—as in 1940—was girding herself to repel invasion.

Hitchin was a model in enrolling volunteers and turning a resolute face to the foe which was ready at any moment to unleash his fleet of flat-bottomed boats from Boulogne. The leading spirit in the town's warlike preparations was Colonel Wilshere, who, after a mass meeting in the parish church of St. Mary's, took over the task of drilling and equipping the volunteers, who engaged themselves not only to defend their own hearths and homes, but "to march to any part of Britain for the Defence thereof in case of Actual Invasion":

The local alarm post was in the Sun yard. But the county alarm post was at Hatfield, and, on any emergency arising, it was to that town the Hitchin Volunteers were to be conveyed with all speed in sixteen wagons fitted out with seats and three covered carts for their baggage. By the next market day after Wilshere's appeal, and in spite of the harvest, those wagons and carts were forthcoming, and were painted "H.V." in unmistakable characters.

The alacrity of the local response made Whitehall seem very dilatory, for when the War Office was asked to supply equipment the official reply

came back that "the demand was unprecedented." The gallant Colonel decided to appeal to the town again and in his extremity he even turned to the Quakers, who, true to their peaceful ideals, had refused absolutely to contribute in money or in kind at the time of the 1745 Rebellion, and had had their windows smashed for not lighting them up with candles on "Rejoicing Nights." But the Colonel did not despair, and, appealing to their local patriotism, which he hoped would transcend their rigid rules against support of war in any form, he addressed the following very diplomatic message to them:

The Society of Friends called Quakers of Hitchin is requested to subscribe in such manner as they shall think proper to the relief and assistance of the poorer inhabitants of the parish likely to be engaged in defence of their country, by providing them with Great Coats, flannel waistcoats, gloves and shoes.

How this appeal fared we do not know, unfortunately. It seems that even the memory of the oldest inhabitant did not reach back so far.

I LIKE the chapters in this book dealing with accounts, and share Reginald Hine's curiosity in the way other people spend their money. There was a certain Daniel Coulson, a master tailor of the Royal Manor of Hitchin, whose accounts for the year 1757 have been preserved by one of his descendants. Some of the prices he paid would make a housewife of to-day green with envy:

Feb 15 1767 I had a new pair of shoes of Mr. Goodman. I paid 5/6 for them.
Sept 27 I bought 2 ducks. Paid 2/6 for them. Paid 3d for a pint of milk.

But it is only fair for a just comparison to give this Hitchin tailor's wages, which would bring a smile of pitying condescension to any member of his trade to-day. For instance, on March 2nd tailor Daniel "worked one hole night and half a nother making mourning at William Crawley's of Whitwell." And all he received was "5d and 3d" for his pains.

I like the way in which, instead of using the word "spent," our Hitchin tailor sometimes writes "wasted." For instance, on January 5th he entered with a rueful heart: "I wasted 1d for brandy and 7d for beer and snuff."

Extracts from another account book "Public Hous Scors" kept by William Lowden, whose family ran the Angel Vaults at Hitchin for four generations, make one's mouth water for the dishes of yesteryear, and give a picture of a most hospitable landlord. The date of the old account book is 1819-1825.

Luncheon, with its standing dish of "Round Ribs," cost as little as 1s. Dinner was 1s. 6d. and breakfast as low as 6d. We can see, too, from this account book how solicitous William Lowden was for the welfare of his guests:

Dip again into the "Scors Book" and you will observe Lowden—his own manager—supervising every detail intent on honouring the tastes and idiosyncrasies of each particular guest. Himself morose and unhappy, he studied to please others.

We know, too, what this admirable innkeeper looked like, as the Quaker Samuel Lucas (1805-1870), the painter of so many Hitchin types (six of his line drawings illustrate this book), drew him—a shock-headed, hirsute character, all whiskers and beard.

Relics of an Un-common Attorney can be dipped into at random or read through from cover to cover; the book is a delight, for wherever we open it its author gives us a vivid and comforting picture of that red-blooded, sturdy, provincial England which still remains our country's great strength to-day.

THE PAST OF A PARISH

themselves together" and partially equipped at their own cost a force of 100 men.

Many of the documents upon which Reginald Hine worked to such happy purpose are among the most precious of the Household Account Book of James Forster, of Hinton, which he bought in 1885-1886. It is a treasure of historical information, in which he took most delight. A number of other volumes of the same author of equal value are in his possession, though he was, it was the only prospect to one of his professions, in which he took most delight. A number of other volumes of the same author of equal value are in his possession, though he was, it was the only prospect to one of his professions, in which he took most delight.

It is difficult to do justice to the variety of papers in the present volume or to the diverse portraits of the men who have been in them. We read in "Noble Women of Hinton," of Devonilla, widow of John Bullard, who obtained the right to sell her land in 1580, and who always when she sat at table did reverence to the embalmed heart of her lord; of that celebrated Hinton witch, Elizabeth, who was won equally celebrated Hinton "saint," Mary Fisher, whom 1653 when asked a secret and high-toned inn, William's persecutors, returned only the answer that it was written in the Book of Daniel; in "Hinton and the Thresh-fort," a letter of the "Scott" an ironic anecdote of a Hardysque book week after work as "left to favour," of the Hinton volunteers, who, faced in their time by an over- whelmed and dilly-dallying War Office, the people of Hinton "drew must be fed, or it will use its horns."

Incidentally, for this is history, the papers here are also history. The brother cardies soon put out, noted in the over-seers' accounts. There is Stray Hinton, whose name explains the name of the village. But it is hard to pick and choose among the wealth of interest in this terra and reading, than the earlier Canon letter of an *UnConformity*. The style, which is straight-forward with humor and sympathy, is the

LAMB IN HERTS.

By JOHN HADFIELD

REGINALD HINE, who died tragically in the spring of this year, was one of those idiosyncratic antiquaries but are now as rare as diamonds or performance on the theatre. An otherwise obscure scholar, practicing in the law, he devoted his leisure to the discovery and publication of local history.

He was no mere compiler of potential minute. The range of his interests, the whistfulness of his writing, "the quaint sparkle of his humor," with the shared with Charles Lamb, who was a great collector of such learned eccentricities as Anthony a Wood and John Aubrey.

of Hinton is one of the few works of local lore which have acquired a national—not an international—reputation. It is a book which is likely to be read, and its one *fait d'arme*, the *Confession of an UnConformity* on both sides of the Atlantic. In his last years Reginald Hine was assembling material for a general history of Hertfordshire, which might so much happiness into the troubled spirit of Charles Lamb. Hine, an ardent admirer of Lamb, was a great collector of local lore which have acquired a national—not an international—reputation. It is a book which is likely to be read, and its one *fait d'arme*, the *Confession of an UnConformity* on both sides of the Atlantic. In his last years Reginald Hine was assembling material for a general history of Hertfordshire, which might so much happiness into the troubled spirit of Charles Lamb.

COUNTRY LAMB

in the whole history of English connections between Elin and his Hertfordshire. Charles Lamb is lauding for his engaging eagerness to collaborate with his biographer. All those details of birth, life, literary career, and death, which would have been so many other authors, cause prying upon the hills of Lincoln (?). We are taken to Burton Church, the delightful cottage where Charles Lamb lived with his godfather, and which went from him, in "Hobbiton." Mackerley End, "The Old Bencher of the Inner Temple" and "My First Play," Charles Lamb and a host of "references in his correspondence with other members of the school's golden generation, recorded or suggested in essay, poem and letter, from his entering the office of Joseph Price to his quitting "the d-d-randa House for ever." His *Autobiographical Sketch*, "The whole suffering that inspired tragic names, analyses his own character and writes his own obituary notice.

The biographer—so it seems—has but to organize the self-revelation of Lamb's equally obliging friends and then, by obeying the directions of the "Autobiographical Sketch," "He intended," he can write *first* to a simple task.

But the simplicity is deceptive and Lamb's assistance a trap set for the self under the comfortable disguise of Burton Manor, Ciro, Essex, Pennis and Elin, but the Charles Lamb occasion character whose personality and stature are as useful—but no more used—to his biographer as his own favored memoir to the biographer biographer of Leigh Hunt, or as Lucius Gay and Wagg to the biographer of Theodore Hook. His spirit-giver of Theodore Hook, his spirit-giver of Theodore Hook, his spirit-give "a fig for dates, which is more than a date is worth," and his matter of fact is more often matter of fact to our knowledge of Charles Lamb. He has brought to light many details and facts, among them a house in his "Confessions of a Dramatist" were his friends and relations as he drew them in one essay or as he drew them in another.

Among all these doubts, and in all these details, there is one thing which has always seemed certain. London was his delight and he felt out his heart, best as Kewick and her giant brood go home." Mr. Reginald Hine has now attempted to steel from London some of the clamor and confusion of an occasion and will set it walks a part in Hertfordshire. No hint of Lamb's assistance a trap set for the self under the comfortable disguise of Burton Manor, Ciro, Essex, Pennis and Elin, but the Charles Lamb occasion character whose personality and stature are as useful—but no more used—to his biographer as his own favored memoir to the biographer biographer of Leigh Hunt, or as Lucius Gay and Wagg to the biographer of Theodore Hook. His spirit-giver of Theodore Hook, his spirit-giver of Theodore Hook, his spirit-give "a fig for dates, which is more than a date is worth," and his matter of fact is more often matter of fact to our knowledge of Charles Lamb. He has brought to light many details and facts, among them a house in his "Confessions of a Dramatist" were his friends and relations as he drew them in one essay or as he drew them in another.

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Reginald Leslie Hine FSA FRHistS. 1883-1947

- 1912 *Anna Celtica*
- 1913 *Dreams + the way of Dreams*
- 1920. *The Dream of Cwmroty*
- 1927-9 *The History of Hilctun 2 vols*
- 1932 *Hilctun Worthies*
- 1931 *History of Hilctun Grammar School*
- 1938 *The Story of Hilctun Town*
- 1945. *Confessions of an Un-common Attorney*
- 1949 *Charles Lamb + his Hertfordshire*
- 1951 (Posth.). *Relics of an Uncommon Attorney*
17 essays

the end of his essay on F. L. Griggs RA etches

" They are gallant men who fight on for the preservation of rural England, + the regeneration of its towns: all the more gallant because they fight a losing battle. Griggs combated every inch of the ground: but it broke his heart, + he was on the point of capitulating even at Campden when the summons came to die.

Fortunately, as an artist, he safeguarded his own little world, his 'secret garden from the strife of tongues'

Do you wonder that he addressed it about on every side and set watchmen at each gate, + filled the palace of his dreams with precious, indestructible things? The beauty that 'haunted him like a passion' is now beyond the reach + ravage of despoilers: The quintessence of it lies imbedded, enshrined in his etchings, in 'a beautiful, timeless, undisturbed world' of his own devout creating

There we may leave him in sure + certain hope
of enduring fame: and if an epitaph were expected
at the end what better than the lines written
to him, once upon a time, by Norman Jewson, his
own familiar friend:

And when at last our kindly Mother Earth
Receives and for us makes a kind bed,
May there be something left of lasting worth,
Something we may have hummed or sung or said,
Something we may have saved or loved or wronged,
That others may remember for a space
And give us, now and then, a kindly thought,
That not in vain we shall have run our race!

From Reginald L. Hine F. S. A.
William Bury,
Letchworth,
Herts.
Tel. Letchworth 532.

23rd April 1945.

Dear Mr. Bramley,

1. It was good natured of you to write to me about my book, and I wish more of the hundreds of letters that I get were written on such excellent hand made paper and in such a clear distinguished hand. I ought to come to you for a lesson in writing.

2. I am much interested in your reminiscences of dear Wilfrid, Alice and Everard Meynell, and I accept, with pleasure the catalogue of the selling of *Werners books*.

3. The Serendipity shop. That brings back many happy memories of 1915 and 1916 when I haunted that particular shop.

4. I was grateful too for the metrical will of Sir Willoughby Dixie, and it is clear from another metrical will sent to me yesterday that I shall have to put a footnote in my second edition. Yours is the best of the three undoubtedly, and seems to have passed a very huge estate. I hope you will kindly allow me to keep this copy.

5. Be a kind man and recommend my book amongst your reading acquaintances, and tell any interested people that there is a second edition on the way, due, I hope, about June. Meantime, there are copies available in many leading libraries.

Yours gratefully,

Reginald L. Hine

THE historian of Hitchin, Herts, Mr. Reginald L. Hine, wrote in his book of Hitchin that if he were buried in the ruined chapel of Minsden, standing in a field near the town, he would "endeavour in all ghostly ways to protect and haunt its hallowed walls."

He claimed to have leased the chapel, and years ago directed that his body or his ashes should be laid to rest there.

Last week, at the age of 65, Mr. Hine threw himself in front of a train at Hitchin Station, and at the inquest yesterday the verdict was: "Suicide while the balance of his mind was disturbed."

'Take warning'

Last night Mr. Reginald Hartley, of Stevenage, Mr. Hine's partner in a firm of solicitors, told the Sunday Express: "Mr. Hine will be cremated at Golders Green on Tuesday, and a memorial service will be held later in the day at St. Mary's Parish Church, Hitchin."

Mr. Hine deeply loved Minsden, which in 1927 had its fallen trees removed and its 15ft.-high undergrowth, then completely obscuring the ruins, cleared away.

In the second volume of his "History of Hitchin," he wrote in 1926: "I have these many years past leased it from the vicars of Hitchin. Let trespassers and sacrilegious persons take warning, for I will proceed against them with the utmost rigour of the law."

'In its shade'

In his "Confessions of an Un-common Attorney," written in 1943, Mr. Hine added: "In its deep shade, many who have been brought low by the cares of this world, or, in my case, by the wear and tear of my profession, have found healing . . . consolation and repose."

"If ever the silent messenger [Death] could appear amiable and lovely, it would be in such a place as this."

The ruins were originally the Church of St. Nicholas, and Mr. Elliott O'Donnell, the ghost hunter, has said he felt "extraordinarily uncanny there."

KILLED BY TRAIN

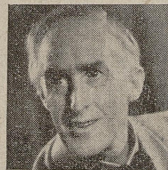
Mr. Reginald L. Hine, 64, of Williambury, near Hitchin, Hertfordshire, was killed when he fell in front of a train at Hitchin railway station on Thursday. He was the author of the "History of Hitchin" and "Hitchin Worthies," and also wrote "Confessions of an Un-common Attorney." He was a partner in the Hitchin firm of Messrs. Hartley and Hine, solicitors. He leaves a widow and one married daughter.

HINE.—On April 14, 1945, suddenly, at Hitchin, REGINALD LESLIE HINE, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., third son of the late Neville J. Hine, of Newtham, Baldock, and beloved husband of Florence Lee Hine, of Williambury, William, Letchworth, in his 66th year. Memorial service at St. Mary's Church, Hitchin, at 12 noon on Tuesday, April 19, following cremation.

Relics of an Un-common Attorney. By Reginald L. Hine. (Dent, 18s.)

THE title of this book is a sad intimation that the author has gone where he may converse personally with the long-departed folk whom his researches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have brought so vividly to life. His "Relics" have the same high quality that made Mr. Hine's "Confessions" deservedly popular. Through the misty autumnal sunlight which seems to pervade the whole story and to make its characters the more real, we watch a Hertfordshire squire building his great house and founding a new dynasty; the fierce austerities of the early Quakers (the Kensittes of those days) and how lovely Mary Ransom triumphed over the Lust of the Flesh as expressed in gold buttons and the ability to wear even the Quakeress bonnet fetchingly; and the amazing story of Nehemiah Perry, who, having earned public gratitude by shooting a gipsy, exhibited the body at 3d. a peep, till it reached a state at which it had to be sent to the Cambridge dissecting rooms. All this and much more Mr. Hine's imagination has recreated chiefly from old account books and the graffiti (the rough inscriptions carved in churches) of which he collected 600 rubbings. The whole book has irresistible charm.

One amid the many sidelights on old England which specially appeals in these inflated days is the high value of money. Thus, in 1701, "To Mrs. Hamond for teaching of hanna to read for five and forty weeks 8s." And think of planting an avenue of 172 limes at a cost of only 1s. 3d. apiece. Nowadays a market gardener will unblushingly ask 6d. for one root of forget-me-not. O. M. GREEN.



Reginald Hine

Relics of an Un-common Attorney

The last work of a lawyer and historian who wore his deep learning with scintillating wit and warm humanity.
Illustrated. 18s. net

Successor to his famous
CONFESSIONS OF AN
UN-COMMON ATTORNEY