

energy, perseverance, and industry. No enterprise seemed too difficult for him to undertake, and he spared no pains to make successful any project which he took in hand. Thoroughness was his guiding principle, and he always paid the most minute attention to matters of detail. He was an early riser, and personally supervised every branch of his extensive business. Although he took no part in public or local affairs, he was ever generous in helping charitable institutions or individuals needing temporary assistance. He was a very good friend to the Birmingham Hurst Street Christian Mission and the Early Morning Adult School movement; and his gifts of bulbs to the City Parks of Birmingham were numerous.

Three flowers chiefly claimed his interest—the Daffodil, the Carnation, and the Sweet Pea. The Daffodil was by far his favourite, and he was one of the founders and chief supporters of the Midland Daffodil Society. No Society ever possessed a more energetic and loyal supporter; he was honorary treasurer of the Society, and it was his ambition to make and maintain it

Mr. Sydenham was 65 years of age. He leaves a widow and two married daughters.

APPRECIATION BY A FELLOW-SEEDSMAN.

"Uncle Robert" is gone, and one of the most interesting figures in contemporary horticulture is thus removed. He attended the Sweet Pea Show on Thursday (17th inst.), and the dinner on the same evening, but by Saturday he had entered into his rest. On Thursday night, when I asked him how he was, he answered: "My general health is better, but my increasing deafness is very trying." It must be twenty-five years or more since I made Mr. Sydenham's acquaintance. At that time the late Mr. William Dean was living at Solihull, near Birmingham, and it was chiefly owing to Mr. Dean that Mr. Sydenham and I became interested in Sweet Peas. Mr. Dean used always to insist that Sweet Peas were the flowers of the future, a prophecy which was fully justified. Mr. Sydenham subsequently became one of the largest dealers in Sweet Pea seed in the country; but formerly he used to devote a great deal of

Obituary.

ROBERT SYDENHAM.—It is with deep regret that we record the death of Mr. Robert Sydenham, of Tenby Street, Birmingham, which occurred with tragic suddenness on Saturday, the 19th inst. In the morning Mr. Sydenham left his home at Edgbaston apparently in his usual health and spirits, and upon reaching the office, about nine o'clock, he plunged at once into business. Only a couple of hours or so afterwards, at 11.30, a member of the staff found Mr. Sydenham lying on the floor in a state of collapse; a doctor was immediately summoned, but Mr. Sydenham was already beyond human aid. He never regained consciousness, and passed away a few minutes after the doctor's arrival.

Born at Salisbury in 1843, Robert Sydenham received his early education in the city of his birth, but later he attended a school at Christchurch, Hampshire. At 14 years of age he went to Birmingham, and became apprenticed to a firm of general merchants. After six years' service he was given the charge of the firm's shipping department, and was subsequently appointed their representative in the United States, where he spent a considerable time travelling about the country. Returning to Birmingham in 1872, he joined his elder brother George in a partnership offered to them by the firm by whom Robert Sydenham was employed, the condition being that they opened a jewellery department in connection with the same business. Robert Sydenham was always extremely fond of flowers, and soon began to grow bulbs, but in quite an amateurish way, without the slightest intention of developing his hobby on commercial lines. His first "bargain" was a dozen Hyacinth bulbs for which he paid 8s. in 1881. They did so well, and yielded so much pleasure for their small cost, that he procured three dozen bulbs the following year; and in 1884 he bought several hundreds at an auction sale. As this latter purchase involved the possession of more bulbs than he required for his own use, he distributed the surplus among his friends, a transaction which may be looked upon as his entrance into the seed and bulb industry. The business, once begun, increased with marvellous rapidity, and became one of the most successful of its kind in the country. Such extension of business necessitated the erection of a block of warehouses and offices, and the Tenby Street site was selected, the buildings being fitted with every modern convenience. By 1886 the annual sales amounted to about eight tons in weight. In the following year, we are informed, the quantity was almost doubled, and this process continued until in 1896 no fewer than 5,000 packages were sent out, containing upwards of a million and a half of bulbs. In the season of 1897-8 over 33,000 orders were executed, and during September and October, 1910, over 40,000 orders were dealt with, the average daily output being about four tons weight. During the last season, about 15,000 customers were supplied with bulbs or seeds.

Robert Sydenham was a man of wonderful

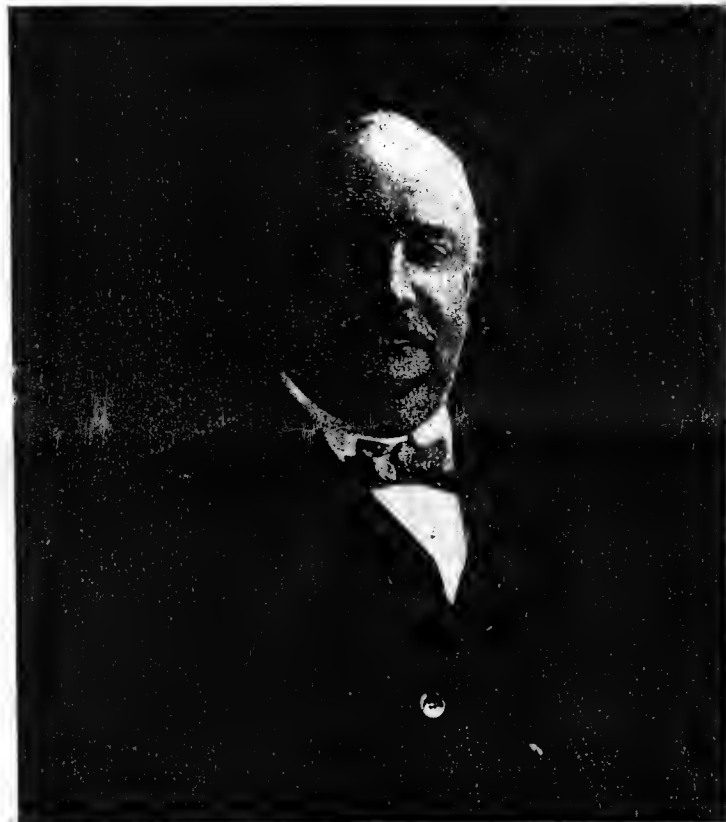


FIG. 35.—THE LATE ROBERT SYDENHAM.

the premier society of its kind in the kingdom. Its present position is largely due to his untiring efforts, and the annual gatherings, in which the social side was always prominent, did a great deal to give the Society a character all its own. He also helped to form the Midland Carnation Society in 1891; he gave it his liberal support, and was Chairman of the Committee at the time of his death. He was attached to many other societies, and was, at one time, President of the National Sweet Pea Society. He was formerly a very successful exhibitor of Carnations, but in recent years his flowers were seldom seen on the tables of the shows.

Robert Sydenham was laid to rest in Lodge Hill Cemetery, Birmingham, on Tuesday, the 22nd inst. A service at Edgbaston Old Parish Church preceded the interment, many friends being present. The service was conducted by the Ven. Archdeacon Owen, Vicar, and the Rev. Joseph Jacob, Chairman of the Daffodil Society. Immediately after the funeral service a meeting of the Committee of the Midland Daffodil Society was held, and a resolution of condolence with Mrs. Sydenham and her family was adopted.

time to growing Carnations, Mr. Dean assisting him with the packing. It was, however, as a bulb importer that he made his great name. His interest in Daffodils, especially, was intense, and he knew Holland as few Englishmen can ever hope to know that country. Had he been a less strenuous worker he might have been with us now; but he was energetic by nature, and used invariably to rise early in order to put in several hours' work before breakfast. The loss of my friend is a serious one to me. We occasionally had slight differences—most of his friends found him hasty—but he never bore malice or cherished animosity. We therefore think of him as one who possessed "the heart of love that guides the helping hand." He was one of the most generous of men; no appeal on behalf of a deserving case was made in vain. He was beloved by his staff for his liberal appreciation of their efforts; his hearty commendation was the unfailing reward of a task well performed. W. Cuthbertson.