

## THE CHELAS SCHOOLS : A PRIVATE BRITISH INITIATIVE

(Contributed by Miss E. M. Moore)

It is possible that few of the present generation have heard of the above schools, or are aware that they did good work in assisting poor children to obtain a fair start with their primary education some fifty years ago, when educational facilities for the illiterate were far harder to find than is the case to-day. Mr. Archibald Turner, an employee and eventually a partner in the firm of William Graham Junior and Co. bought certain quintas which had at one time been used as summer residences for the staff, and notably the estate known as Dos Alfinetes, in the vicinity of Chelas. Himself a convinced believer in the virtues of a sound foundation and touched by the illiteracy of the numbers of poor children whose parents worked in the neighbourhood, he converted two of the outbuildings of Dos Alfinetes into a school for boys. There were a couple of large rooms, one above the other, with a small house for the master alongside. A garden in front and a high surrounding wall completed the premises.

The school, under a master Sr. Júlio Ernesto da Silva, who taught there for over half a century and only died in 1936 to be replaced by his daughter, was from the outset successful and a great influence for good in the locality. Indeed so useful did it prove that a small dismantled chapel in the near-by parish of Beato António was also put in order as a school for girls, and at his death in 1880 Mr. Turner left money in trust for the purpose of carrying-on the good work. Only one stipulation

was made, namely that there should be a daily reading of a portion of the scriptures.

Until the year 1913 the schools were carried on under an administrator appointed by the trustees, who were resident in Scotland, but in that year the power was transferred by the only surviving original trustee, Sir John. H. M. Graham. Bart. to a local committee which was formed under the auspices of the Managers Court of the Church of Scotland in Lisbon.

The first committee was made up as follows :

Mrs Doddrell  
Miss Murray  
Rev. R. M. Lithgow  
Mr. J. A. Edwards  
Mr. G. A. Hall  
Mr. R. Moreton  
Mr. H. C. Dartford

On the formation of the Portuguese Republic the authorities at first sought to close all schools in which religion was taught, but at Chelas this caused such an outcry that the Archibald Turner schools were permitted to continue their good work ; indeed the boys' school is to this day doing excellent service. The girls' school was however closed in 1927. Depleted funds and the marriage of the teacher explain this decision.

Mr. Archibald Turner appears to have been both well liked by the community of his day and also a man of independent character and sterling honesty. He is said to have returned to the Customs House a number of cases of goods that the firm's despatcher had illegally managed to clear without paying the corresponding duties, and D. Pedro V the then reigning monarch, on hearing of the incident, sent Mr. Turner a letter of thanks. It is on record that he lived for many years over the office, then as now situated at no. 7 Rua dos Fanqueiros, and that he was very fond of cats, many being his constant companions. At that time the mid-day meal — roast-beef and vegetables in the English manner — was eaten on the office premises, partners and clerks sitting down together, likewise

any customers who chanced to drop in about mid-day and cared to share the repast.

Archibald Turner died in Lisbon on the 25th April 1880, after fiftysix years of an honourable and profitable mercantile career. He was a relative of Mr. Nichol McNichol, and is buried in St. Georges church yard.

The headstone in engraved with the following particulars :

«Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.»  
John. VI. 37.

#### ARCHIBALD TURNER

Born at Dunoon, North Britain, 10th September 1801.  
Landed at Lisbon, 29th March. 1824.  
Died in Lisbon, 25th April. 1880.

«O que vem a mim não o lançarei fora.»  
João. VI. 37.

I have to thank Mr. Inglis and Mr. Marsden for their generous answers to my enquiries.

E. M. MOORE.