

RUPERT BROOKE

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ANY biographical account of Rupert Brooke must of necessity be brief; yet it is well to know the facts of his romantic career, and to see him as far as may be through the eyes of those who knew him (the writer was unfortunately not of this number) in order the better to appreciate his work.

He was born at Rugby on August 3, 1887, his father, William Brooke, being an assistant master at the school. Here Brooke was educated, and in 1903 won a prize for a poem called "The Bastille," which has been described as "fine, fluent stuff." He took a keen interest in every form of athletic sport, and played both cricket and football for the school. Though he afterwards dropped both these games, he developed as a sound tennis player, was a great walker, and found joy in swimming, like Byron and Swinburne, especially by night. He delighted in the Russian ballet and went again and again to a good Revue.

In 1906 he went up to King's College, Cambridge, where he made innumerable friends, and was considered one of the leading intellectuals of his day, among his peers being James Elroy Flecker, himself a poet of no small achievement, who died at Dnvoa only a few months ago. Mr. Ivan Lake, the editor of the *Bodleian*, a contemporary at Cambridge, tells me that although the two men moved in different sets, they frequented the same literary circles. Brooke, however, seldom, if ever, spoke at the Union, but was a member of the Cambridge Fabian Society, and held the posts of Secretary and President in turn. His socialism was accompanied by a passing phase of vegetarianism, and with the ferment of youth working headily within him he could hardly escape the charge of being a crank, but "a crank, if a little thing, makes revolutions," and Brooke's youthful extravagances were utterly untinged with decadence. He took his classical tripos in 1909, and after spending some time as a student in Munich, returned to live near Cambridge at the Old Vicarage in "the lovely hamlet, Grantchester." "It was there," writes Mr. Raglan H. E. H. Somerset in a letter I am privileged to quote, "that I used to wake him on Sunday mornings to bathe in the dam above Byron's Pool. His bedroom was always littered with books, English, French, and German, in wild disorder. About his bathing one thing stands out; time after time he would try to dive; he always failed and came absolutely flat, but seemed to like it, although it must have hurt exces-