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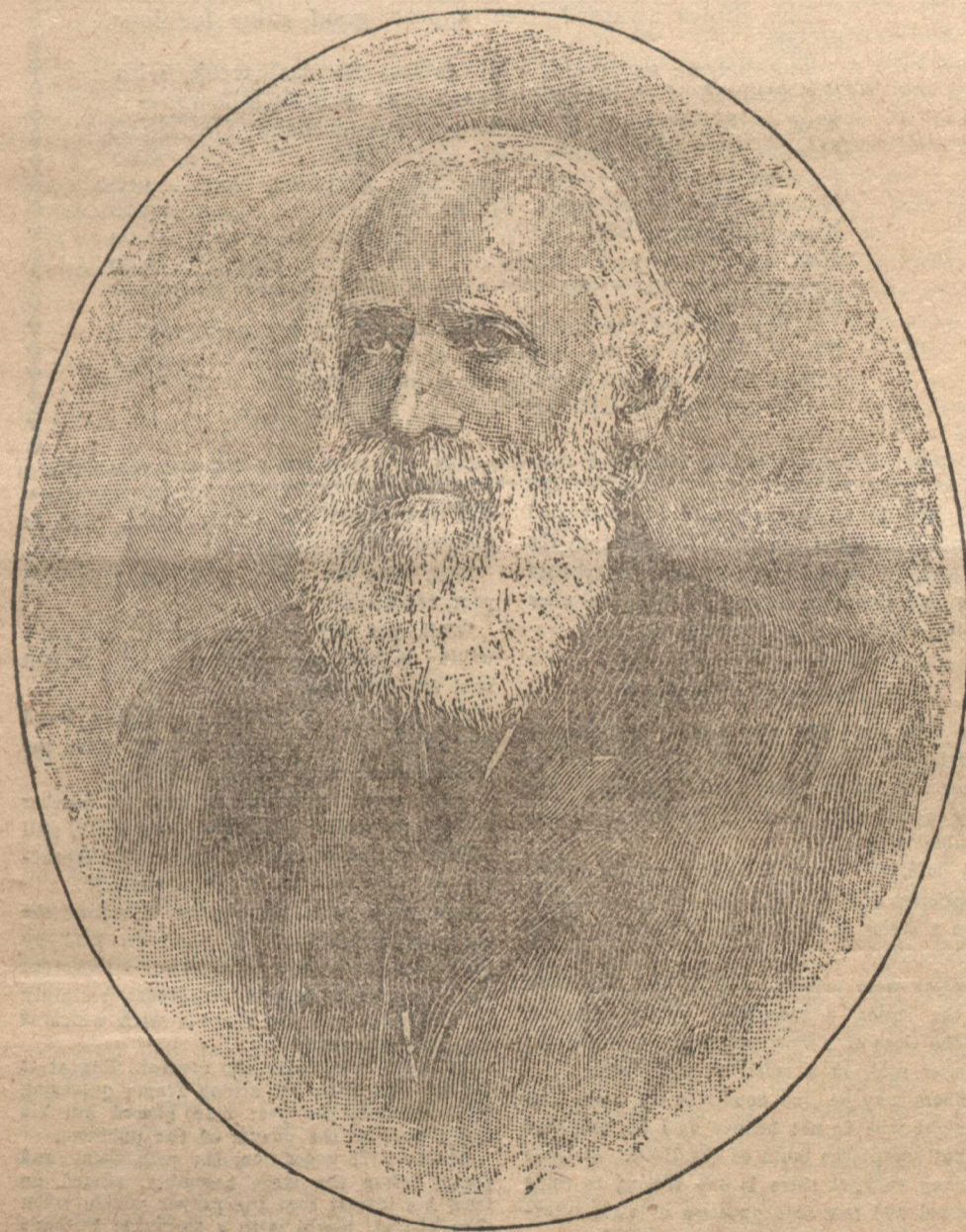
The Late Sir George Williams

The Father of the Y.M.C.A.

The life story of Sir George Williams, who passed to his rest on Monday, November 6, is a long record of unwearying public beneficence and faithful Christian service. His fame is due to the fact that more than sixty years ago he founded an organization which now extends throughout the civilized world;

ed against the temptations of the great city. He entered the establishment of Mr. George Hitchcock, in St. Paul's Churchyard, and in more ways than one, considering his peculiarly sensitive temperament and the influence of association, was fortunate in his environment. In the social and worldly sense his career under the shadow of St. Paul's did not lack romance and drama. He married his master's daughter, and succeeded to the

ing early in that year, George Williams and a friend were making their way to Surrey Chapel. The conversation then took place between the two young men which was to lead to such great results. Mr. Williams remarked how splendid it would be if religious services such as they enjoyed could be held in all the large establishments in London, and suggested that they should start a movement with that object in view. His companion entered heartily into the scheme, and from this brief Sabbath evening conversation the Y.M.C.A., with all its ramifications, sprang. Sixty years ago the Y.M.C.A. met in a modest room in Blackfriars, the rent of which was half a crown a week. It was moved to Gresham street and Aldersgate street, and eventually in 1881 to Exeter Hall, the name of which is a history in itself. To-day the membership is 710,000, and the approximate value of the buildings owned by associations is over £6,800,000. It was due to the action of George Williams that Exeter Hall was purchased. In 1880 he gave a contribution of £5,000, conditional upon others joining him, for the purpose of securing the building. Upon the death of the philanthropical Earl of Shaftesbury, he succeeded him in the presidency of the Y.M.C.A. Mr. Williams, as he was then, had the co-operation in those days of many eminent men of all denominations, and among laymen the late Earl Cairns and Mr. Samuel Morley were conspicuous. Sir George Williams was deeply interested in the British and Foreign Bible Society, the London City Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the Band of Hope Union, and many kindred organizations. His last public appearance was at the sixty-first anniversary meeting of the London Central Young Men's Christian Association, but a short time before was accorded a great ovation from upwards of 1,000 delegates, representing no fewer than twenty-five separate countries of the world, on the occasion of the jubilee conference of the Young Men's Christian Association's World's Alliance, held in Paris in April of the present year. He was knighted in 1894, and the occasion served to show how wide was the circle of his friends and admirers. Sir George Williams, indeed, won friends even more by his sweet and lovable character than by his many acts of public service. Just now it is well to quote the words he uttered only a few months ago: 'My last legacy—and it is a precious one—is the Young Men's Christian Association. I leave it to you, beloved young men of many countries, to carry on and extend. I hope you will be as happy in the work as I have been, and more successful, for this will mean blessedness to your own souls, and to the souls of multitudes of others.' It has been truly remarked by one who knew him well that Sir George was one of the most modest and un-



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but quite apart from his connection with the Young Men's Christian Association, he has ever been to the front in all kinds of social and religious work. Throughout a strenuous and highly successful business career, he has ever lived the Christian life, and has kept the Christian ideal steadfastly before his eyes. Born in Somersetshire, in October, 1821, he was educated at Gloyne's School, Tiverton. When quite a lad, he was called upon to earn his own living, and secured a situation at a drapery establishment in Bridgewater. Even in his youth he was moved by an earnest Christian impulse, and when he came to London at the age of twenty he was already arm-

headship of a great business. In one sense, his life was another of those fairy tales which happened to be true. The young man, inspired by a zealous desire to render Christian service, soon made his influence felt in his new surroundings. Other young men who were followers of Christ entered the establishment, and he joined with them in holding meetings in a bedroom for prayer and Bible study. One by one other employees in the firm joined them, and every week there were fresh evidences that the efforts of these young enthusiasts were abundantly blessed. It was in 1844 that the first steps towards forming the Y.M.C.A. were taken. One Sunday even-

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