

## X *Evolution – Samuel Radcliffe Platt*

Samuel Radcliffe Platt, the second son, was the only one of John Platt's seven sons to assume outright their father's mantle in Oldham, both at the Company and in the affairs of the town, a role for which he had been well and knowingly prepared from the time he had completed his formal education. At the time of John Platt's death Henry Platt, Samuel's senior by three years, was the only other son to have serious knowledge of the workings of the Company; John Platt had kept him constantly posted on Company matters. Unfortunately the insight the letters concerned gave of the workings of the Company was lost to posterity when the letters were included in paper, gathered up in the estate office at Gorrddinog, to be sent for salvage during the second world war. Henry Platt, however, was committed to the profitable Gorrddinog estate and to perpetuating the Platt position, which John Platt had firmly created, as a leading Caernarfonshire county family. The other sons because of the form of education they had received and the subsequent style of life they were leading, as country gentlemen, away from Oldham, or by virtue of their absolute youth, were quite unprepared for participation in the executive direction and management of the Company as it had then developed although, in due course, James Edward Platt, the already mentioned sixth son, became a non-executive director of the Company. James Edward Platt, in his earlier days, had kept closer ties with Oldham and Saddleworth. He served on the Oldham Borough Council, as a member for the Werneth Ward, for the years 1882-5. He was, in company with Samuel Radcliffe Platt, one of the councillors on the committee which established the Public Library in Oldham, following on which the valuable Edwin Butterworth manuscript, concerning the history of Oldham, which John Platt had procured and presented to the Lyceum, was transferred to the Library. James Edward Platt was a Justice of the Peace both for Oldham and for Saddleworth. It was he who opened, in 1884, the Grand Bazaar in Delph to raise funds for the new building for the Mechanics Institute in that village, when he deputised for Samuel Radcliffe Platt who, on the day, was indisposed. He was the Family's colourful character, his exploits in the hunting-field – a pursuit



Samuel Radcliffe Platt  
1845-1902

he had commenced with the Oldham Harriers but extended all over the country – and in all forms of field sport, including a safari in East Africa, in company with one of his Radcliffe cousins, are recounted in a private publication entitled "The Galloping Major".

The factors concerning the Family apart, a much more crucial factor had been in play. Senior employees who had devoted their entire energies to the service of the Company and were thoroughly versed in its business had come to expect a stake in its fortunes and direction. John Platt had recognised the need to meet the aspirations of these people if the emergence of a rival concern, in their hands, was to be avoided. It has already been seen that when he and his brother, James, acquired the Hibbert interest they had immediately extended partnerships to three of the Company's most senior employees and, progressively, John Platt had continued the policy of spreading the ownership so that by 1867, the year before the Company became "Limited", close on twenty per cent of his shares had passed into the hands of others in the Company. (John Bullough, a competitor of Platt Brothers, based at Accrington, steadfastly ignored such aspirations with the result three of his senior employees – two Tweedales and a Smalley – left him to found a rival concern at Castleton, near Rochdale, which successfully exploited the Howard & Bollough Company's know-how). When Platt Brothers was re-formed as a limited liability company, in 1868, it was with a capital of £1 000 000 and by 1876, just four years after John Platt's death, the shedding of shares by the Family, following the trusteeship established by John Platt's will, had, under the guidance of Samuel Radcliffe Platt, been at such a momentum its holding had reduced to fifty-nine per cent. In 1898 a new