OBITUARY

SIR CHARLES OMAN

By the death of Sir Charles Oman on the 23rd of June 1946 at the age of 86 the world (or should one say the universe?) of numismatics has lost a notable figure. At Oxford he ended as Chichele Professor of Modern History, but his interests ranged far and wide over other fields, ancient and medieval, with an engaging delight in their by-ways; and both as student and teacher he realized to the full the value of coins.

His own collections of Greek silver (somewhat surprisingly he eschewed bronze), and of English and Roman coins, were remarkable in their scope and variety; and it was his pride never to have paid an extravagant price for any of the rarities, and they were many, that came his way. For many years he presided over the Royal Numismatic Society and it is at its meetings that most of us will remember him best. Here the preliminary exhibitions of curious and rare pieces gave his prodigious coin-memory full scope; ready parallel and apt remark came impromptu. Then, after the paper of the evening—during which some might have thought at times he nodded, but they would be wrong, no point escaped him—after the paper a lead of kindly and illuminating comment, filling in the historical background of the issues which formed the evening’s subject, and encouraging to a general discussion. It was hard for us to believe that for him numismatics was really a side-line, though a favourite one; and that, after all, his main activities lay in the wider field of history. This is not the place to speak of his contributions on that side, his classic History of the Peninsular War, for instance, or his studies in the Art of War, but they were numerous and wide-ranging. Of his numismatic studies the most considerable are his eminently readable Coinage of England, and many papers and reviews in the periodicals on a diversity of subjects, notably on the coins of Corinth, and of the Seleucids, on Roman legionary coins, on the decline and fall of the denarius in the third century A.D., and many others.

Finally, no notice of Oman could fail to mention his ready kindness to the young collector and student. For all its massive detail he wore his learning lightly and found no difficulty in establishing easy contact with them. There must be many to whom a visit to his delightful home in Oxford for tea and a discursive ramble through his cabinets formed the beginning of a lifelong interest.

E. S. G. R.

MR. T. M. TURNER

Thomas Malcolm Turner joined this Society as a junior member at the age of 16 in March 1937. His keenness as a student collector and his interest in the Society’s welfare were soon made manifest, and in 1941 when war duties made it necessary for Mr. Derek Allen
to give up the Secretaryship, Mr. Turner was chosen by the Council
to take his place. He held the office till the end of 1943, earning the
commendation of the Council, who in their 39th Report placed on
record their "appreciation of the sterling work performed by the
Secretary in the face of difficult circumstances". It being necessary
for him at that time to devote all his time to reading for his final B.A.
examination, he asked to be relieved of his office for six months.
Having taken his degree he resumed the secretarial work, but in a
very short time found that his appointment to the Air Ministry
involved working hours that made it impossible for him to attend the
meetings regularly. He had therefore to resign the Secretaryship,
but his interest in the Society was undiminished and he came to the
meetings whenever he could. He was one of the faithful few that
helped to hold the Society together and to keep it alive during the
war and the "blitz". He was a member of a type of which the Society
cannot have too many, for his interest was primarily in research. He
was a constant visitor to the Museum at Colchester and gave the Curator help in arranging their coins. He contributed a paper on the mint
of Colchester to our Journal in 1943, and read a paper on "The King's
Crown on Saxon and Norman Coins" in April 1942, and one on
"Some Aspects of English Coin Design" in April 1943. As recently as
October 1945 he read a paper on "The Relations between British and
Continental Currency during the Late Saxon Period"—the first-fruits
of some research he had begun and of which he had written and spoken
to me with enthusiasm. His interests covered a wide field of history
and of numismatics, though the late Saxon and the early English
periods were his special delight. He was a keen and unselfish collector
and has bequeathed his coins of the Colchester mint to the British
Museum. He was never strong and for the last four months he had
been in bed, forbidden to read or write or even to look at coins. He
bore this trial with patience to the last. His death, which took place
on the 1st of May 1946 in Colchester at the age of 25, has robbed the
Society of a numismatist of great promise, and his friends of a
stimulating and attractive personality.

E. J. W.