

OBITUARIES

L. A. LAWRENCE

It is with deep regret that we record the death on 5 July 1949 of Laurie Asher Lawrence, F.R.C.S., in his ninety-second year.

The undisputed doyen of British numismatists, on account not only of his great age but also of his vast and varied knowledge, Mr. Lawrence had been appointed Director of the British Numismatic Society at the inaugural meeting held in 1903. That office he retained for five years, after which he was Vice-President for nine years and, later, a member of the Council on many occasions and a Medallist. His services to the Society as Director, Editor, and contributor were inestimable.

Lawrence's first numismatic publication was in the *Numismatic Chronicle* of 1890, when he wrote on "A Baronial Coin of Eustace Fitz-John" in his own collection, and the next few years saw a steady flow of papers from his pen on a variety of medieval subjects. Already his interest in the coinage of Edward III was appearing; three of his papers in the next decade dealt with that series. In the following years the greater part of his output went to the *British Numismatic Journal* which he was then editing, and his contributions included a significant paper on "Forgery in relation to Numismatics" and his "Long-cross Coinage of Henry III and Edward I" which, like his "Short-cross Coinage 1180-1247" which appeared concurrently, are still the standard authorities on these series. A valuable paper on Henry VII, records of hoards and sundry other pieces, appeared in the Fourth Series of the *Numismatic Chronicle*, and variety creeps in in the form of papers on silver counters exhibiting London criers and their cries and on early English brass or latten counters.

It was in 1926 that the first part of Lawrence's monumental "Coinage of Edward III from 1351" was published. A second part came three years later, a third in 1932, and a final part in 1933. This was without prejudice to a number of lesser papers among which Roman coins are first found at this period. *The Coinage of Edward III* was later published in book form with an appendix and index.

Of Lawrence it may fairly be said that to him more than to any other scholar is due the position that British numismatics have now attained. That position can best be summarized by saying that to-day it is generally possible to date to within a year or two any coin struck after the Conquest. The importance to the archaeologist of such accurate dating requires no emphasis.

The results achieved derive in the main from Lawrence's realization that the privy-mark system ordered in the indentures under which the mint operated should produce evidence on the coins which if studied in great detail would build up a series from which accurate dating would become possible. His application of this theory to the coins of the reign of Edward III in particular has given us a chrono-

logy of remarkable completeness and, it would seem, accuracy. In the earlier series, before the privy-mark system operated so elaborately, equally detailed study and the combined use of numismatic and documentary evidence likewise produced important results.

In the course of his studies Lawrence, who was a born collector, acquired an ever-increasing number of coins. A sale as long ago as 1903 showed what he had managed to amass at the age of 45. What was then sold has more than been recovered since, and at his death he possessed a collection of medieval English coins unrivalled in size and in the number and variety of significant pieces besides a large range of Roman cabinets. While he had an eye for a fine specimen, Lawrence never discarded a fragment or a pierced coin if it was of interest: one of his proudest possessions was a piece of which no less than a quarter was missing. Under his will his interesting collection of forgeries passes to the British Museum where he considered such deceptive pieces would best be housed—and at the same time be available for study and the protection of numismatists. He also directed that the British Museum should be allowed to buy such of his coins as they might select, and it is gratifying to know that full use has been made of this unique opportunity. His collection of Edward III gold has been disposed of intact, which one feels would have been his wish, but the remainder of the collection will be dispersed under the hammer and the occasion will be a rare one, especially for those interested in the coinage of the twelfth to sixteenth centuries.

A word must be said of Lawrence as a man. The affliction of deafness, a burden throughout his life, debarred him from the highest office in the Society which he would otherwise undoubtedly have filled. But it may have helped to lead him to the quiet study of numismatics and made that study doubly happy for him. In a world ever moving faster and more noisily here was work he could do and do undisturbed in a way impossible to most of us. At his house in Hampstead he delighted to receive numismatists old and young and he gave help and encouragement without stint. He was a beloved and deeply respected member of this Society and one whose place it will be hard indeed to fill.

C. E. B.

C. A. WHITTON

IF a man's services are to be measured by the degree in which they are personal, then the British Numismatic Society has suffered a grievous loss by the death of Mr. C. A. Whitton which occurred on 19 January 1950. The thirteen years of Mr. Whitton's membership were marked by a devoted service to the work of the Society. He was twice Director and edited the *Journal* over a long period. He did much other useful though inconspicuous work. His interest in the Society finds its last expression—characteristically enough—in a

generous bequest. The esteem and affection in which he was held by all members was shown by his election by a unanimous vote, last November, to honorary membership.

Mr. Whitton did valuable and original research and his death is a heavy loss also for numismatic science. He had studied deeply the English coinage from Edward III to Edward VI, and published in this *Journal* in 1939 his first paper—on the heavy coinage of Henry VI. In it are evident that regard for sober truth as opposed to fanciful theorizing and that deeply ingrained historical sense that mark all Mr. Whitton's work. It is perhaps permissible to regret that in this paper as in his work on the coinage of Henry VIII he disciplined himself to such brevity of exposition. There are pages where a more expansive development of his text would have been welcome. For his paper on Henry VI Mr. Whitton was awarded in 1941 the Sanford Saltus gold medal of the Society. It seems likely that his paper on the coinage of Henry VIII, publication of which begins in this number of the *Journal*, will prove to be his finest achievement, and his most characteristic one. No record of Mr. Whitton's numismatic work should fail to mention his joint authorship with Mr. C. E. Blunt of the paper on the coinages of Edward IV and Henry VI restored, recently published, of his papers on the die links between Richard III and Edward V, and on "Some Aspects of English Currency in the Late Middle Ages", all of which appeared in this *Journal*. He contributed short papers and notes to the *Numismatic Chronicle*, notably revisions in the light of his own research, of Brooke's paper on the privy-marks of Henry V and of Lawrence's papers on Edward III. In 1948 Mr. Whitton was asked to undertake the editing of the "Addenda and Corrigenda" to Brooke's *English Coins* that the Society was preparing for a new edition. It was the last work that he was able to complete, and he lived to see it published.

In spite of chronic ill health and so much numismatic work, Mr. Whitton kept up an extensive correspondence with friends and students. He had a gift for letter-writing and for imparting to his correspondents the glowing enthusiasm with which he charged his letters. The cutting off of the flow of these remarkable letters is not the least part of the cruel loss that his death has inflicted on his friends. They are left with the record of his fine scholarship and the memory of a much-prized friendship.

E. J. W.