

OBITUARIES

THE EARL OF SCARBROUGH

Roger Scarbrough and I were contemporaries at Eton, during the First World War, at Oxford University, and in the House of Commons. Our families were also friends and neighbours in the north country. We can truly say that we were lifelong friends.

I am, therefore, glad to have this opportunity to pay tribute to an important but relatively little known service which he rendered to his country. As the Second World War progressed, I became increasingly conscious, as Foreign Secretary, of the changed world we should have to face when it was over. Whatever else this might entail, there would evidently be a demand for an increased knowledge of a number of foreign languages, particularly Oriental and Slavonic ones. Naturally I took a special interest in the former, on which I had worked for my degree at Oxford, while the Russian contribution to the Allied victory must mean that country's increasing influence in world affairs.

After discussion at the Foreign Office, I decided that we should set up a searching enquiry into this problem before the end of the War. We wanted an examination into the facilities already in existence at universities and other educational institutions for the study of Oriental, Slavonic, Eastern European, and African languages and culture. We also wanted some recommendations as to what could be done to improve upon the opportunities which were already available.

If this important commission was to do a really useful job it was essential to find an active and interested chairman, who would command the respect and support of his fellow members.

At this period of the War, early 1944, Lord Scarbrough had recently returned from his successful Governorship of Bombay. I had seen quite a lot of him at that time, and not least because he shared the wish of the then Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, that I should succeed Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy. This did not prove possible, but it occurred to me during our talks that it would be very valuable to the work of our proposed commission if Lord Scarbrough would accept its chairmanship. This he generously did, and on 15th December, 1944, the "Scarbrough Committee" was appointed. Its Report was submitted to the Foreign Secretary on 16th April, 1946, and was published in the following year.

The result of the Report was a very great increase in the number of university posts in Asian studies, especially in London. The Committee argued most successfully for the expansion of Oriental studies, and there is no doubt that its work, significantly assisted by the evidence of the then President of the Royal Asiatic Society, Sir Richard Winstedt, was invaluable in furthering the study of the languages I have mentioned, to our national advantage.

Lord Scarbrough was President of the Royal Asiatic Society from 1946 to 1949 and continued his active interest in its work until he died. His loss will be deeply felt by members of the Society, as by his many friends in all walks of life.

AVON.

PROFESSOR ARTHUR JOHN ARBERRY

Those of us who knew Arthur Arberry, first in his brilliant prime, and then in latter years when he was beset by ailments which caused him both distress of heart and physical disability hard for a man of his intellectual energy to bear, can hardly yet believe that he

has left us so suddenly. Although for some time, on account of his illness, he had withdrawn himself more and more from our midst, and this to our loss, he still continued to carry out his literary research, and, even if with mechanical difficulty, to write. Almost the last time I saw and talked with him, he was collating the printed text of a work of al-Sha'rānī with a MS from the Chester Beatty Arabic collection which he knew so well.

Arthur Arberry was educated at Portsmouth Grammar School, from which in 1924 he entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, as Senior Scholar, to win a swift series of successes in the academic field—Distinction in the Classical Tripos (1929), the E. G. Browne Scholarship, the Wright Studentship, the Senior Goldsmiths' Studentship, and, in 1931, a Fellowship at Pembroke. He followed this with two years in Cairo as Head of the Department of Classics (1932–34), but returned to Britain as Assistant Librarian at the India Office in 1934. During World War II, not the happiest period in his life, he was seconded to the Ministry of Information; early in the war too his house was totally destroyed during the bombing of London. He welcomed his return to academic life when, aged just under 40, he was elected Professor of Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, from which he transferred to the Chair of Arabic in 1946. In the following year, 1947, Arthur Arberry achieved his cherished ambition in being elected Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, and he returned as Fellow to his old college once more.

Arthur Arberry's lifelong passion lay in Arabic and Persian literature, and he set himself the pleasurable task of making both kinds known through the medium of English. He was specially concerned with poetry, to which his acute sensitivity rendered him sympathetically attuned, but on the whole he was probably most successful in his translation into prose. His rendering of the Koran into colourful but accurate English has won general praise and has become the standard modern version. Closely associated with Arberry's taste for literature was his love of fine Arabic and Persian MSS, fostered no doubt by his work on the India Office Library, the Chester Beatty collection, and other libraries. It is characteristic of this side of his interests that one of his last published works was a selection of facsimile pages from the great range of Korans in the Chester Beatty Library.

From his teacher R. A. Nicholson, Arthur Arberry early acquired a taste for mysticism, and his first publications lay in the field of Sufism. Arberry was deeply attached to Nicholson, who had encouraged his first footsteps on the path of Oriental studies, and he kept a photograph of Nicholson always on his desk. It was characteristic too of Arthur Arberry that he had a respect amounting almost to reverence for the great Orientalists of the past, and particularly for those in the Cambridge tradition. Arberry indeed bridges the age between the toiling isolated Arabist of our European universities, the "harmless drudge" whose labours had so profound an effect on reviving Classical Arabic in the Arab countries themselves, and the post-war generation of Arabic scholars which enjoys far wider opportunities for research than those masters of previous generations. Yet, for all his interest in Classical Arabic and Persian culture, Arberry was also very conscious of the present. From time to time he published within the field of modern literature. He was furthermore fully aware of the necessity to introduce the study of the contemporary Middle East into Cambridge, and he took the initiative in setting up the Middle East Centre there.

Arthur Arberry had a truly amazing output of published work. If some of it will be superseded, yet much of his writing will endure as a lasting contribution to learning. His books are well known in Muslim countries, as is also his sympathetic, but never patronizing, attitude towards Islam. His services to Persian studies were recognized in 1964 by the award of the *Niṣhan-i Dānīsh* by the Iranian Government. His many students from overseas remember his kindness, his understanding of their first falterings, and some have already expressed to me their sense of loss at his going. Up to his last days his quick incisive mind would still lead him to discern the nub of a problem and often the solution of it while others remained still uncertain. Even when his troubles weighed down his spirits Arthur Arberry could at times be his old self, with a merry ready wit and chuckle, an entertaining conversationalist and good host. Indeed, for the writer, Arthur Arberry's departure means

the loss of a staunch and valued friend and colleague over many years, a man essentially sympathetic and kindly of heart; perhaps indeed it was his fault that he was too sensitive, too quick to respond. Arthur Arberry in joining the ranks of the great Orientalists of the past has left a sore gap in the ranks of those of the present.

R. B. SERJEANT.

PRESENTATION OF THE BURTON MEMORIAL MEDAL TO
BRIGADIER S. H. LONGRIGG, O.B.E., D.LITT.

Presenting the Burton Memorial Medal for eminent services in Oriental exploration and research to Brigadier Longrigg on 9th October, 1969, the President, Professor C. F. Beckingham, said: "Brigadier Longrigg, who tonight becomes the twelfth Burton Memorial medallist, has had several distinguished careers, in the army, in administration in Iraq and Eritrea, in the oil industry, and as a scholar. He has published six books, all of importance, as well as numerous articles, including some notable contributions to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. His first book, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, was one of the earliest and is still one of the best examples of a sensible approach to the history of an Ottoman province; before it was published historians had tended to dismiss all such subjects with an allusion to 'the dead hand of the Turk'. He followed this with lucid surveys of the intricate political history of Iraq in the first half of this century, and of Middle Eastern oil. There is not time to allude to all his works now, but I should like to refer particularly to his *Short History of Eritrea*, an erudite but concise narrative which is especially relevant to the award of this Medal, for it incorporates the results of much enterprising travel, shrewd questioning of informants and research into the reports of local officers.

"The Burton Memorial Medal was founded in 1923, in honour of Sir Richard Burton, and was first awarded to the late St. John Philby in 1923; Mr. C. J. Edmonds and Mr. Wilfred Thesiger were the last two recipients. Brigadier Longrigg has honoured the Society and has given us all very great pleasure in agreeing to accept the Medal which I now present to him."