

imperial frontier defences. In particular he hoped that further comparison of our Wall and the German Limes would illuminate each work. 'Though you won't enter the Triple Alliance (and you are quite right), I hope, regarding the Walls, the two nations will combine their researches and every discovery made on either side of the sea will be an appeal to the other.' So he wrote to me some years ago, *à propos* of excavations on our Wall, and though the recent course of discovery has tended rather to reveal differences than similarities between the two frontiers, it has also shown that a knowledge of the one is a real help to a better understanding of the other.

2.—WILFRED JOSEPH CRIPPS, C.B., F.S.A.

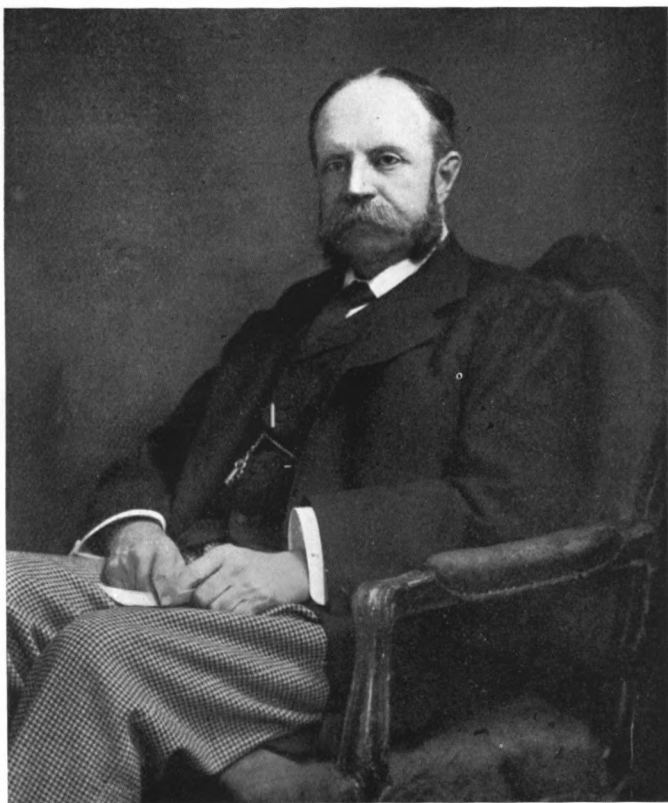
BY T. M. FALLOW, F.S.A.

I have been asked to say a few words about my old and valued friend, Mr. Wilfred Cripps, author of 'Old English Plate,' the news of whose decease on October 26th came as a heavy and unexpected shock to his many friends.

Although Mr. Cripps was seriously ill three years ago, and had never recovered his former vigour, the end came with unlooked for suddenness. He had been confined to bed since September, but this was not widely known, and I was myself unaware of it. That there was any imminent danger was only made known to his fellow-townsmen at the evening service in Cirencester church on Sunday, October 25th, when prayers were offered on his behalf. He passed away at three o'clock on the following morning.

Mr. Wilfred Joseph Cripps, C.B., was the head of a very old Cirencester family, members of which began to take a prominent part in the affairs of the town in the reign of queen Elizabeth. As time went on, the family became more and more prosperous and wealthy.

Mr. Cripps's grand-father, Mr. Joseph Cripps, represented Cirencester in parliament from 1806 to 1841. On his death in the latter year he was succeeded in the representation of the borough by his eldest son, Mr. William Cripps, the father of the subject of this memoir. Mr. William Cripps was at one time a Peelite 'whip,' and



*Yours ever,
Wilfred Cripps.*

THE LATE WILFRED J. CRIPPS, C.B., F.S.A.

From a Photograph by Elliott & Fry of London.



was a lord of the treasury at the time of the Repeal of the Corn Laws. Mr. William Cripps married his cousin, Miss Mary Anne Harrison. She was descended from 'Parson Harrison,' who held the living of Cirencester for the long period of 63 years (1690-1753), and was a sister of the late Benjamin Harrison (of our own day), archdeacon of Maidstone and canon of Canterbury. By this marriage Mr. William Cripps had four children—three sons and a daughter. Of the sons Mr. Wilfred Cripps was the eldest. He was born in 1841, and is survived by his sister only, both his younger brothers having predeceased him. Mr. Cripps graduated at Trinity college, Oxford, in 1863, and was called to the bar two years later. Although he joined the Oxford circuit he soon retired from active legal work, and settled down to the life of a country gentleman doing much useful work both on the county council and as a justice of the peace. He received the distinction of a civil companionship of the Bath in 1887. Mr. Cripps was twice married, first to a daughter of the late Mr. J. R. Daniel-Tyssen. She died in 1881. He married secondly the countess Helen Bismarck, a relative of the famous German chancellor. His second wife survives him.

It is, however, of his antiquarian work that I ought more particularly to speak.

I first became acquainted with Mr. Cripps in the early part of 1877, when he was collecting materials for the now well-known book *Old English Plate*. For some time previously I had been examining old ecclesiastical plate in Yorkshire and noting the hall-marks on it. Mr. Cripps heard of this and eventually a correspondence began between us on the subject, and a friendship ensued which lasted till Mr. Cripps's decease. Letters and boxes of sealing wax impressions of hall-marks passed for many years almost daily between us, and I am not exaggerating if I say that we must have written some thousands of letters to one another about plate during the last quarter of a century. We did not so often meet, and it was only when we were both in London together that we did so, and I regret now, very much, that I never managed to accept Mr. Cripps's invitation, again and again repeated, to visit him at Cirencester.

The information I was mainly able to send to Mr. Cripps, before other fellow workers came on the scene, related to York and Newcastle

plate. It was our joint work which allocated the half leopard head and half fleur-de-lis mark to York. The compilation of the tables of York date-letters involved a great deal of planning and no little research. I have fortunately preserved Mr. Cripps's earlier letters dealing with this detail of the work, and his tentative schemes of the tables of York date-letters sent 'for your private eye only,' as he put it. Mr. Cripps was justly proud of this part of his work, and jealously (and successfully) guarded the copyright in it against one or two persons who thought fit to attempt to produce it in publications of their own with doubtful additions and 'improvements.'

As regards Newcastle Mr. Thomas Sewell, at one time warden of the Goldsmiths' company, gave a good deal of assistance, and a suggested list of Newcastle date-letters since 1702, compiled by him, formed the basis of the tables given in the first edition of *Old English Plate*.

I have a letter from Mr. Cripps by me, dated May 24, 1877, written prior to a special visit I paid to Newcastle to examine the church plate there. He says, 'Thank you for your letter. I think, in reply, I had better send you the sheet of Newcastle letters kindly given me by Mr. Sewell whose name is at the bottom of it. The early cycles want some correction I believe, and you will not be able to square the Otley mark with any on the list. Mr. Sewell has a collection of marks which I daresay he would let you look over. The church plate may give us the old Newcastle mark [before 1697] and perhaps a few date letters. My clerical correspondent in Newcastle, is the Rev. T. A. Stoodley, Lovaine place. He has kindly promised to help me in the church plate line. I do not know him personally, but heard that he was interested in this sort of thing and wrote to him.' This is the earliest allusion to any definite enquiry about Newcastle plate, and I may add, that both Mr. Cripps and I had expected to find that a town mark of a Catherine wheel which occurs up and down Yorkshire, might prove to be the old Newcastle mark. It is still unidentified, while the later researches of others have established what the old Newcastle mark was. The publication of the book on the old church plate of the diocese of Carlisle, gave a fresh impetus to the study of a subject, which, twenty-five years ago, had only attracted the attention of two or three antiquaries in

different parts of the country. Since then, workers in this field of archaeology have been numerous, and much excellent work has been done. In Northumberland and Durham the old church plate has been carefully examined by Mr. Blair and others, and it will not be forgotten that Mr. Cripps summed up their labours in a paper which he contributed to *Archaeologia Aeliana*, vol. xvi.

The care and pains which Mr. Cripps took in regard to plate and hall-marks in the north of England, was the same which he expended throughout the country. He was constantly collecting facts, and patiently and laboriously studying them, with the result that when *Old English Plate* appeared, it at once took a position from which it has never been dislodged. I believe no other work on any archaeological subject has ever before proved such a success, or has gone through eight editions in so comparatively short a period, and I am glad to hear from Mr. Cripps's widow that her great loss will not interfere with the preparation of the ninth edition, to be followed probably by many others.

It was not only old plate which interested Mr. Cripps. Of late years he had fitted up a museum attached to his house, in which he collected together a large number of Roman 'finds' which had been made at Cirencester. Mr. Cripps was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in June, 1880, and when in town frequently attended the meetings of the society. He was also a few years ago made a member of the Goldsmiths' Company of London.

There is much else I could have said, but this notice has run to too great a length as it is. Otherwise I should have liked to have spoken of Mr. Cripps's generosity, not to say munificence, shown to his native town and its institutions. In the *Cirencester Parish Magazine* there is a cordial and touching reference by the vicar to Mr. Cripps's 'earnest old fashioned piety.'

His last letter to me, dated August 3rd, 1903, bears a very friendly allusion to Mr. Taylor of Chipchase castle, and ends with the words, never, alas, to be fulfilled, 'I will write again soon'.