



THOMAS ROMANS.

[For *Memoir* see p. 297.]

## XVII.—THOMAS ROMANS.

By the death of Canon Thomas Romans the Society has lost a wise counsellor and a true friend (Frontispiece). He became a member in January 1923, was elected to Council in 1933, was promoted to a vice-presidency in 1945 and served as president for the three-year period 1948-1950, thus leading our Society's contingent on the centenary pilgrimage of 1949 and representing us at the first congress of Roman frontier studies in the following week. The record of his publications gives no indication of the wide range of his archæological interests or of his profound learning: only two papers in *Archæologia Aeliana* record him as joint author,<sup>1</sup> but reference to our *Proceedings* will indicate something of the qualities which endeared him to us as an ideal guide on visits to ancient monuments of whatever period, whether in our own district or further afield. It was an object lesson to note the care with which his addresses on such occasions had been prepared, the skill with which they brought out the significance of the features—historical or structural—which it was most important for us to take note of, and the way in which he seemed able to evoke the thoughts and recall the very words of the people whose monuments he was describing. Much of his archæological work, as it happens, was done outside our territory, and it will fall to other societies to record his share, for example, in the excavations at Brough on Humber (in partnership with Dr. Philip Corder), or his services as a member of the Morris Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, of which he became a Fellow in 1932.

<sup>1</sup> AA<sup>4</sup> XXII 1-21 (with I. A. Richmond and R. P. Wright): *A civilian bath-house of the Roman period at Old Durham*, and XXIV 177-182 (with F. Hastings): *Two fragments of pre-Norman cross shafts from Ovingham church*.

It was my good fortune to meet him for the first time in 1926, when I took part in my first excavation on a Roman site, at Bainbridge in Wensleydale; there (for three weeks) I sat at his feet while he and I together excavated the east gateway of the fort, and he initiated me into the technique of digging, curbing the natural impatience of youth while communicating something of his own combination of caution and enjoyment; and in later years I cannot remember a season's work on the Wall or at Corstopitum, from 1927 onwards, when he did not take at least one opportunity of visiting our excavations and helping, by advice on structural problems or by photography, to deal with critical points. He was indeed a conspicuously good archaeological photographer, and his collection of negatives and lantern slides, covering architecture and sculpture of many periods as well as Roman, and especially strong in its Anglo-Saxon and early medieval sections, must have been one of the finest in the country. It was characteristic of his public spirit that he should have left that collection to our Society, for the benefit of its members, subject only to Professor Ian Richmond's right to select for his own use such parts of it as might be of value to him. He remembered the Society's library, too, in his will, bequeathing twenty of his most valuable books (as selected by Professor Richmond) to it. He was a member of the Durham University Excavation Committee for more than twenty years, and one of the most conscientious and helpful of our advisers on that committee.

Thomas Romans was born on 24 July, 1876; he was educated at St. Peter's School, York, and at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, where he graduated with a first class in natural science. After his ordination he served as curate successively at Haltwhistle (where he had his first opportunity of studying the Wall), Gateshead and Staindrop; during the war of 1914-1918 he placed his training as a scientist at the service of his country, and soon after the war he became vicar of St. Mark, Millfield, Sunderland, where he remained for fifteen years until, in 1937, he was appointed

master of Sherburn Hospital—an ideal preferment for a man of his humanity and for an antiquary of his quality. He was made an honorary canon of Durham in 1956.

He died on 3 January, 1958, and was buried in the burial ground of Sherburn Hospital, after a service in its chapel at which Canon H. E. W. Turner paid a most moving tribute to his memory, on the text “A man greatly beloved”. Canon Turner has been kind enough to allow me to quote from his address, the full text of which has been printed in *The Bishoprick* for February 1958, p. 25f.:

“To visit an ancient church or an archæological site in his company was an enriching experience. . . . As a man T.R., as many of us learnt to call him, was a delightful companion. It was always a joy to see him, and there are many homes (mine among them) which will miss his visits for many a long day. He had a keen sense of enjoyment, a wide humanity and a wealth of conversation which never obtruded itself, but which lit up whole ranges of experience. He had strong opinions which he expressed only when the time was ripe or the opportunity was given. Christian humility and fidelity were the outstanding characteristics of his life and (of late years) a wonderful patience in the face of difficulties shone out strongly. In the line of duty he never spared himself. He died, as he would have wished, in harness. He was full of plans for the future right up to the last, and his keen and alert mind never faltered. His home-coming (for of few can death be more truly so described) was without lingering, like a glad response to a long-awaited summons.”

We give our heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Romans and to her three sons.

ERIC BIRLEY.

