



SIR EDMUND CRASTER.

[See p. 355.]

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Herbert Henry Edmund Craster (frontispiece), born in 1879, was the son of Edmund Craster of Beadnell Hall. After a distinguished boyhood career at Clifton, he became a scholar of Balliol College, Oxford, obtaining a double first in Litterae Humaniores, and in the school of Modern History. The discipline of classical studies and the love of history never deserted him, but their fruits ripened early and brought the distinction of a fellowship at All Souls. This college he never left: the *Chicheliana quies* suited his gentle and scholarly temperament, and gave him the necessary time to devote to study. In the nine years between 1903, when he was elected to his fellowship, and 1912 when the Bodleian Library first claimed him, Northumberland and the North were the chief beneficiaries of his creative studies, though the Lothian Prize was the reward of his labours in 1904. The earlier volumes of the third series of *Archæologia Aeliana* or *Proceedings* of this Society are filled with articles upon documents and families of Northumberland which witness Craster's skill and zeal. They were an earnest of the effort which he was to devote, between 1907 and 1914, to three volumes (VIII, IX and X) of the *Northumberland County History* as editor and responsible author of many of the sections. It was in this connexion that his long association with Roman archæology in Northern Britain began. Haverfield had just commenced the exploration of Corbridge, and articles both on this site and upon certain parts of the Wall were needed for the *County History*. But Craster was not content only to receive. His own distinctive contribution to the early Corbridge reports was the highly important and meticulously accurate description of the coin finds, in volumes IV, VII and VIII of the third series of *Archæologia*

Aeliana and in the fifth volume of *Journal of Roman Studies*. Famous figures in numismatic studies have since made their contribution to the coinage of Roman Britain and Craster's name is perhaps now little known. But his conclusions have not been eclipsed and his details shine undimmed. Corbridge was not the only field of his studies in this sphere. The important series of coins from the Yorkshire coastal signal-stations came under his purview, in volumes II and XII of the *Journal of Roman Studies* and, a decade later, in the *Archæological Journal* for 1932. Here again his interpretation was both decisive and lasting.

Long before these interests in coinage had come to an end, the Bodleian Library had claimed him as sub-Librarian, a post which he held from 1912 until 1931. This was supplemented by the Keepership of Western Manuscripts from 1927 onwards, in fulfilment of the interests which had already been revealed by his masterly contributions to the *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*, volume II appearing in 1922-24 and volume VI in 1937. By then he had been Bodley's Librarian since 1931, and held the post until 1945. The ordinary duties of this important office are heavy. Craster shouldered in addition the task of preparing and carrying through the vast scheme for the extension of the Library and the co-ordination of its three parts, the Camera reading-room, the Old Bodleian and the New Bodleian. This was not his scheme for a new library: but it was his duty to bring the new organization into being, and he brought to it immense diligence and power of mind, coupled with a determination to make the system work. His public reward was a knighthood in 1945 and the inconspicuous corbel which bears his portrait-head on the east side of the inner arch of the southern gateway passage. Academic recognition had already dowered him fittingly and richly, by the conferment of an honorary D.Litt. from his own University, followed by honorary doctorates of Letters from Cambridge, Leeds and Durham. Seven years after his retirement from the Librarianship came his *History of the*

Bodleian, written with scholarly charm and that highly perspicacious dry wit which was one of his particular characteristics.

So long a life so powerfully infused with scholarly interests could never rest from industry and research. When he retired from the Bodleian, he became Librarian of the vast Codrington Library at All Souls, and was engaged upon a history of it, of which large parts are understood to be complete. His work there was daily and tireless, zealous till the end, when feebleness and a strong asthmatic tendency would have daunted a less determined and devoted nature. On the very day before he died, when illness and weariness had almost overborne him, he presented, with dogged bravery and determination, his annual librarian's report to a College meeting. On Palm Sunday, 1959, appropriately enough, he won the reward of salvation.

In northern archæology he leaves a gap that will not be filled, for, as a Corbridge Trustee, he was a living link with the earlier days of Roman excavation. It was a perpetual astonishment to all who conversed with him upon such matters how deep and detailed his knowledge of all new work continued to be, and with how critical an eye he could view its relationship to what had gone before. This was one facet of a nature retiring and aloof, wise and perspicacious, holding all its interests very dear and loving them with great tenacity. In terms of the intellect Sir Edmund was one of an enviable class, that of "rich men, furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations", and the world is the poorer for his passing. He is survived by a widow, a son of whose archæological interests in the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works he was very proud, and a devoted daughter, to all of whom the warmest sympathy is extended.

I. A. RICHMOND.

