SIR IAN RICHMOND

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A Memoir

On 5th October 1965, Ian Archibald Richmond, Knight, President of the Society of Antiquaries of London, Fellow of the British Academy, and holder of Honorary Doctorates from five universities, died at his home in Oxford, at the height of his career and in the fullness of his powers, at the tragically early age of sixty-three.

In his Chair at Oxford of the Archaeology of the Roman Empire he was the acknowledged leader and the most brilliant exponent of his subject in the country. Of his career at large, and the full extent of his contribution to scholarship, this is no place to offer an account. Let us, rather, first briefly notice his services to our own Society, and to that countryside in which he lived for half his working life; and then attempt, however inadequately, to recall at least some aspects of the personality of the friend we knew, and have lost.

He became a member of our Society on 25th July 1928—the same day as the writer of these lines—and in due course served as a Curator 1940-43, as a Vice-President 1942-50, and as President 1951-53. By birth a Rochdale man, he came to Newcastle in 1935, on his appointment as Lecturer in Roman-British Archaeology at King's College; and in Newcastle he married (1938) Miss Isabel Little, by whom he had a son and a daughter. Advanced to Reader in 1943, he was in 1950 appointed Professor in Roman-British History and Archaeology. Thereafter Oxford claimed for her own so distinguished a son, and in October 1956 he was called to be the first occupant of his newly created Chair, and to a Fellowship of All Souls College.

For Ian Richmond, however, residence in a given place

raised no presumption that his activities would be confined to that neighbourhood. That he gave at least as much of his time and attention to the Cumberland end of Hadrian's Wall as to ours is not indeed surprising. But always he was moving around the province, and often well outside it; in the last twenty years, especially, he was here, there, and everywhere, with at times up to four or five separate operations on his hands at once. It is, therefore, the more remarkable that between 1934 and 1956 he should have published (not infrequently in collaboration with others) in the pages of this journal no less than thirty separate articles; and that, with the exception of a four-year gap from 1946-49, some contribution from him should have appeared in every annual issue of the Fourth Series from Volume XI to XXXIV.

Yet to his friends, and they were legion, even this output, this standard of performance—only a portion of a much larger whole—seemed somehow while he was yet with us of less significance than his own unique personality. We are left with the remembrance, first and foremost, of his appearance—the sturdy body topped by the large distinctive head, that with his rosy apple cheeks combined to give the odd, unexpected appearance of a wise and friendly creature from another kind of world, as it were an imp or a gnome. Yet his taste was too good, his whole being too firmly rooted in reality, to create the least impression of eccentricity. Any such notion was indeed ruled quite out by his manner, invariably measured, unhurried, deliberate; and by the knowing worldly twinkle in his eye.

It was, however, when he spoke that his authority became at once apparent, indeed imposed itself. If he spoke deliberately, it was not for want of words. It seemed, rather, as if he were giving himself time to choose out of an infinity of alternatives the one turn of phrase that alone was apt most perfectly to express the exact shade of his meaning. For that is what he made words do for him.

Yet more exciting even than the words was the long, clean

articulation of his argument. He was the very nonpareil of expositors. No matter how complex the situation he was describing, whether in a formal setting with all the apparatus of visual documentation at his service, or in the open air with only a stick to indicate the points under discussion, so long at least as he was speaking he drew the dullest of listeners along with him at every turn. To enjoy on those occasions the conjunction of such clarity of thought with the skill so to present his matter that every one of his audience should understand it was an experience which never lost its thrill.

The same clarity distinguished his writing, of which the effect was heightened by a prose style unmistakably grounded in his training in the classical languages, above all in Latin. Commanding so rich, so powerful a combination he repeatedly demonstrated that the expression of mere fact and argument can be given a nobility of its own, and need not fall short of the level of true literature.

If that in itself was no more than outward evidence of the quality of his mind, the flavour of it was due to the strong sense of history that infused his approach to all he undertook. The recovery of history by the analysis and interpretation of its monuments was the mainspring of his working life; and when the limits of inference seemed to have been reached, the intuition that is the hallmark of the highest scholarship came to his aid, and illumined his conclusions. He was a searcher if ever there was one, and therein lay his happiness. For he enjoyed life almost always, and the sense of fun in him continually bubbled up, to the delight of others. But this same searching spirit drove him on, too, to undertake a burden of work almost unendurable, for in that work nothing would satisfy him but the best. Time brought deserved success; and success is sweet. But what mattered above all was the search, and that was unending.

Of his inner life, the life of the spirit, few perhaps could speak with knowledge. It was, however, with Ian a principle that " One should praise God while one can ". In that spirit he was a devoted churchman, making a point of regular

attendance both at his Parish Church, and notably in his College Chapel. And his charity towards Man found abundant expression in his daily living.

For the quality for which above all others his memory will be most cherished lay, not in the realm of the intellect, but in that of sheer human warmth. No man can have made new friends more easily, nor kept them longer. To him absence or separation made no difference, and he would take up the tale again just where it had been left off. He had an instinctive sympathy with all manner of men, high and low alike, which made them feel he understood them, as he well did. And if he did not exactly approve all the foibles he could so quickly see in others, he cheerfully enjoyed the contemplation of most of them. Good humour, seldom ruffled, and often spiced with wit, combined with an acute insight into personality, was indeed the basis of all his friendship. By innumerable folk in many walks of life he will "baith lang and sair" be missed.

J. D. COWEN.