



SIR EDGAR BONHAM-CARTER

K.C.M.G., C.I.E.



By the much-regretted death of its first Chairman of the Executive Committee, Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter, who held that chief position from the beginning until 1950, the British School of Archaeology in Iraq has lost one of its creators. So much and for so long was he identified with the School's existence that its history was, in large measure, a part of his own later life. Founded in memory of Miss Gertrude Bell, and partly upon a legacy left by her, which was afterwards generously supplemented by her family, it was a project dear to the heart of Bonham-Carter, who cherished a strong admiration for the work in Iraq of one whose own appreciation of his services found, in turn, several warm expressions in her letters. When a movement was begun to realize Miss Bell's project through the raising of a public subscription, Bonham-Carter took a leading part in the proceedings, and when the School was duly founded he accepted the office of Chairman, and held this with universal approbation until 1950, when he yielded to eighty years and impaired health, and decided, amid general regret, that he must resign from the leadership. This step in no wise abated his interest in the School, or the assiduity with which he attended, under increasing disability, the meetings of the Executive Council and other School functions.

How much is due to Bonham-Carter for his creative work upon the legal systems of the Sudan and of Iraq is perhaps now forgotten in those countries, but will not be neglected by history. What he did and what he was for the British School of Archaeology in Iraq has been no less fundamental, and is in no danger of oblivion. In the years before the second World War he, with the constant support of the late Sir Edward Keeling, directed all the School's activities, the most important of which was the launching and maintenance of this Journal. He was always eager to attain what he rightly thought the School's principal object, to have a permanent seat in Baghdad, and to make that the main centre of its activities. For this purpose sufficient funds were not then available, and consequently, when the War came and all activities, including this Journal, had to be suspended, the Chairman was careful to ensure that all possible resources should be husbanded so as to provide for the ultimate fulfilment, which happily came about after the War. This done, he might have considered his work accomplished, but in fact he continued to direct the

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School's now much-extended activities, and it was typical of his zeal that, even after retirement, one of his last acts was to suggest that the first twenty-five years of the School's existence should be suitably celebrated.

To his enthusiasm in working for the foundation of the School, to his wisdom and firmness in setting its course, to the unerring practicality of his decisions and to his vision of its true objectives, a very great debt is owed. That he had himself more than a general acquaintance with the archaeology of Iraq he would not have claimed, for his interest in the School reposed rather upon his association with the country and with the work of Miss Bell than upon any particular taste for antiquity. But all who had the privilege of seeing him at work for the School over so many fruitful years will be in no doubt that the study of ancient, no less than the polity of modern, Iraq will for long benefit from the initiative and well-directed energy of this remarkable organizer and kindly man. In offering to Lady Bonham-Carter the sympathy of all its members the British School of Archaeology in Iraq joins not only those other public causes which owed so much to Sir Edgar but very many personal friends, who have been saddened by his loss.