

OBITUARY

LAWRENCE ROGER LUMLEY

11TH EARL OF SCARBROUGH, K.G., P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O.

27 JULY 1896–29 JUNE 1969

In the second half of the twentieth century all privilege, even that which has been fairly earned by long and honourable service, appears to be suspect, especially among the young. Indeed, the more extreme exponents in the universities of this latter-day egalitarianism are hardly willing to accord ordinary respect, let alone deference, even to senior scholars of outstanding distinction and international celebrity. In this there is a certain irony, inasmuch as in all recorded history there have never been students more privileged than the present generation of British undergraduates.

Even so, it may be conceded that the growth of egalitarian feeling is not wholly unhealthy. If there are a few who carry it to extremes in order to satisfy their own sense of self-importance, there are probably even fewer who would hanker after a return to the eighteenth century, when men of talent could hope for advancement only by writing in terms of fawning adulation to and about their patrons; and, whereas most people are still prepared to accept that a reasonable degree of privilege may be honestly earned, there is undoubtedly a growing impatience with hereditary privilege arising from nothing more laudable than the accident of birth.

Yet, even for hereditary privilege there may still be something to be said. By any standards, Roger Lumley, eleventh Earl of Scarbrough, was a privileged man. Born to a position of patrician affluence, educated at Eton, Sandhurst, and Oxford, wielding great influence in his home county of Yorkshire and moving in the highest social circles in London, he was indeed blessed from the outset with formidable advantages. It would have been easy for one so placed to live for himself, to enjoy his great inheritance, to accept his privileges as of right and to ignore the claims of the community. But that was not his outlook upon life. To him privilege spelt opportunity, the opportunity to serve his monarch, his country, and his native county, and to devote himself to a variety of worthy causes, including scholarship and especially scholarship related to the study of Asia and Africa.

This is not the place, nor is the present writer the person, to dwell upon his great and many-sided public career. He began as a soldier and served with honour in the first World War. Thereafter he studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, and, having taken his degree in 1921, turned his attention to politics, entering the House of Commons as Member for Kingston-upon-Hull East in 1922. His talents were quickly recognized and he became Parliamentary Private Secretary to a succession of Ministers until, at the general election of 1929, he lost his seat, when the second Labour government was returned to power. In 1931 he re-entered Parliament as Member for the city of York and continued

to serve in the House of Commons until, in 1937, he was appointed Governor of Bombay, a post he was to hold, and to adorn, until 1943. Others more fitted to do so will doubtless write elsewhere of the distinction and courage with which he carried out the arduous duties of the Governorship in most difficult political circumstances, which became even more intractable after the outbreak of war. It is probably to the experience of those years that his subsequent continuing interest in the development of Asian and African studies in the United Kingdom may be traced.

After his return to England, his interests tended to move away from active participation in politics, though he was for a very brief period Parliamentary Under-Secretary for India and Burma in the caretaker government which held office between the break-up of the National government and the return to power of the third Labour administration. The variety of his activities was quite astonishing. He had a long-standing interest in freemasonry and from 1951 to 1967 was Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of Masons of England, having previously served for four years as the Deputy Grand Master. In 1948, he became Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding. Always a loyal son of Yorkshire, he devoted himself unsparingly to its interests and was never happier than when his duties allowed him to get away to his home at Sandbeck Park, near Rotherham. When, after the accession in February 1952 of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a new appointment had to be made to the post of Lord Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household, with all the heavy responsibilities which would be entailed in connexion with the coronation, Lord Scarbrough's supremely tactful personality and talent for organization made him a natural choice. A Knight of the Garter since 1948, he was created a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order in 1953 and continued for more than ten years to carry with distinction the great responsibilities of the Lord Chamberlain.

But in this notice, written for the *Bulletin* of the School of Oriental and African Studies, it is clearly right that the emphasis should be placed mainly on his immense services to scholarship and to learned institutions, above all in the field of Asian and African studies. For decades, one might almost say for centuries, before 1914, the scholarly study of the peoples and civilizations of Asia and Africa had been seriously neglected in the universities of the United Kingdom. There had been many individual scholars of great renown, particularly in Islamic, Indian, and Chinese studies; and, as early as the seventeenth century, Chairs of Arabic had been founded in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Nevertheless, in Britain, which above all other Western countries had played a dominant role in Asia and Africa from the seventeenth century onwards, there was singularly little provision (and that little seriously uncoordinated) for the study of the many diverse and ancient civilizations of those continents. It took very many years of devoted effort by men of the calibre of the late Sir Philip Hartog, reinforced by the chastening experiences of the first World War, to bring into being in 1916 a School of Oriental Studies in the mother country of the British Empire; and, even after its delayed and difficult birth,

the School spent its early years in a state of acute penury, financially living from hand to mouth and sustained only by the devotion of its small but distinguished staff and the unwavering support of the University of London of which it was a part. Few if any of those who held positions of great responsibility in national affairs showed any understanding of the fact that the School was a national asset of great potential value. It was not until the actual attack by Japan at the end of 1941 that there was a sudden realization by the nation's leaders of its unpreparedness to cope with the demands of a war in the Far East. Then, at long last, the resources of the School were called upon; and by near miracles of improvisation and ingenuity, the needs of the services for interrogators and interpreters were coped with.

It was possibly this experience, reinforcing the insistent urgings of the School, that led the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Right Honourable Anthony Eden, to appoint in December 1944 an interdepartmental Commission of Enquiry on Oriental, Slavonic, East European, and African studies, with the following terms of reference:

'To examine the facilities offered by universities, and other educational institutions in Great Britain for the study of Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African languages and culture, to consider what advantage is being taken of these facilities and to formulate recommendations for their improvement'.

It is a truism that the success of any such Commission of Enquiry depends to a large extent on finding the right Chairman; and the appointment of Sir Roger Lumley (as he then was) was a brilliant choice. Lord Scarbrough himself would have been the last to deny that much of the success of the Enquiry was due to his fellow members, notably two whom he co-opted, Sir John Pratt and the late Sir George Tomlinson, both of whom were later to hold office as Vice-Chairman of the School's Governing Body. But in so far as the success of such an Enquiry can ever be attributed to any one man, it was surely attributable in this case to the Chairman himself. Before it began, he can have known relatively little of the situation of these studies in the universities of the United Kingdom. By the time it ended, through the exercise of his talent for patient, thorough, disinterested assessment of evidence, he must have been one of the best informed people in the whole country. On the recommendations in the Commission's *Report*, which was submitted to the Secretary of State in April 1946, and published in 1947, the whole remarkable post-war development of Asian, African, Slavonic, and East European studies in the universities of the United Kingdom has been founded. More particularly, the building up of the School of Oriental and African Studies into an institution recognized throughout the world as occupying a unique and pre-eminent position in its fields of study is ascribable almost entirely to the wisdom of the recommendations of Lord Scarbrough and his colleagues—so much so that, if it may be said that the true first founder of the School was Philip Hartog, its second founder was undoubtedly Lord Scarbrough. The insistence in the *Report* on the need to develop strong coherent

departments, whether or not undergraduate demand manifested itself in the early stages ; on the building up of library facilities ; and, most original and prescient of all, on the need for a generously conceived programme of overseas study leave for academic staff, set the post-war School firmly on the right course, from which it has not since found it necessary to depart to any significant degree.

It was characteristic of Lord Scarbrough that, having set the course, he should wish, amid all his other preoccupations, to help to steer the School along it. When his old friend, the late Lord Harlech, relinquished the Chairmanship of the Governing Body in 1951, he accepted at once an invitation to succeed him ; and, to the School's immense advantage, continued to hold office until 1959. As those who knew him had expected, he proved to be an ideal Chairman, presiding over the meetings of the Governing Body and over major School functions with an easy and unforced dignity. He was characteristically unobtrusive in his approach, never interfering or allowing others to interfere in purely academic decisions, but always ready with wise counsel and firm support when it was needed. On his retirement from office, he was elected with acclamation an Honorary Fellow of the School he had served so well.

The School was, of course, by no means the only learned institution to which he devoted his great talents. Among his many other interests, he was Chancellor of the University of Durham, President of the Royal Asiatic Society from 1946 to 1949, President of the East India Association from 1946 to 1951, and President of the Royal Central Asian Society from 1954 to 1960 ; and he served from 1960 to 1963 as Chairman of the Commonwealth Scholarships Commission.

It remains only to write of the man himself. There was about him a natural dignity and authority, which made him an imposing figure on ceremonial occasions. I well remember the great impression he created when he attended, as Her Majesty's Special Ambassador, the coronation of His Majesty the King of Nepal, at which I was fortunate enough to accompany him. But he was also at heart a rather shy and humble man, somewhat reserved and difficult to know at first but a warm and true friend once one had gained his confidence. Thorough and painstaking in all he did, he would follow through tenaciously any task which he had set himself. He maintained high standards and he expected them of others. To him, as to few men in the course of its history, the School of Oriental and African Studies is immensely indebted ; and, as the present Director said in 1959, when speaking of Lord Scarbrough's years of office as Chairman : ' Of course we would wish for more but I console myself and offer consolation with the knowledge that these were " worthy years and among the best that ever were " '.

R. L. T.