

## Obituary Notice

*Mill Stephenson.* Mill Stephenson died on 29th July in his eightieth year. Born at Hull on 20th October 1857, he was educated at the Richmond Grammar School and at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he took his degree in 1880. He was called to the bar at the Middle Temple in 1885, but does not appear ever to have practised. He was elected to the Society of Antiquaries in 1888, and at his death was its twelfth senior fellow.

Spared from the necessity of having to earn his living he was able to devote his boundless energy throughout practically the whole of his long life to the pursuit of those antiquarian studies in which he was particularly interested. Even in his school-days he had taken up brass-rubbing as a hobby, not from his own account with the whole-hearted approval of his headmaster, and it was on the subject of monumental brasses that he was to become the acknowledged authority. His memory for brasses and their location was prodigious. One could hardly name an ancient church in the kingdom to him but he could say at once what, if any, brasses of interest it contained. In his orderly mind the subject was perfectly classified, and his knowledge of the details of the brasses made him an authority on such matters as heraldry and medieval armour and costume.

It was perhaps his native Yorkshire common sense that made him turn to the more practical side of archaeology and to such tangible objects of antiquity as could be brought within the range of an exact science. In the more speculative side he was little interested and always confessed to an inability from the want of sufficient imagination to understand the recent developments in such branches of the science as prehistory. But in Roman antiquities he was especially interested and acquired a very useful knowledge of them, and in particular of Roman coins, which enabled him to superintend with the utmost efficiency the excavations at Silchester for the greater part of the twenty odd years during which they were carried out by the Society. Here his remarkable ability in dealing with the workmen under him, his ready sympathy with them and understanding of their ways, combined with his strong sense of humour, inspiring their respect and real affection for him, contributed very largely to the harmonious carrying out of the work. In all this undertaking he sought no self-glorification, and we must attribute it to his own desire for self-effacement that only in the last of the reports did he allow his name to appear as a co-editor.

Of his services to the Society so far as they are on record he was on the Council seven times between the years 1894 and 1908, he was a member of the Research Committee from its start in 1909 until he resigned from it last year, and intermittently he served on the Executive and Library Committees. Between 1894 and 1934 he contributed many papers and exhibitions, chiefly on his favourite subjects of monumental brasses and heraldry, which will be found recorded in the *Proceedings* and this *Journal*. With Mr. Ralph Griffin he wrote papers on the Roll of

Arms of c. 1540 in the Society's possession and on a set of Elizabethan roundels in the British Museum, both of which were printed in *Archaeologia*. But it would be almost impossible to say how much unrecorded and purely voluntary work he undertook for the Society during the many years in which he worked in the library. Suffice it to say that he put in order and catalogued its great collection of brass-rubbings, he made a hand-list of its manuscripts, described in detail some of its rolls of arms, and at the time that he was taken ill was cataloguing and arranging the Roland Paul drawings.

Outside the Society he acted for some years as honorary secretary of the Royal Archaeological Institute, and from 1889 to the beginning of 1897 he served the Surrey Archaeological Society in the same capacity, where his sound business instincts were invaluable in restoring the Society from the somewhat chaotic conditions into which its finances had for the time fallen. He also ran for many years the old Monumental Brass Society until the difficult conditions of the War period decided him to close it down. To the Surrey Archaeological Society he contributed amongst numerous other papers perhaps the fullest descriptive list of the brasses of any county which has yet appeared. The instalments of it came out in nine consecutive volumes of the Society's *Collections* (vols. xxv to xxxiii). In collaboration with Mr. Griffin he printed as a separate work *A List of Monumental Brasses remaining in the County of Kent in 1922* (1923). No doubt a search of the transactions of their archaeological societies and of other serial publications would reveal other counties which profited from his thorough knowledge of this subject, such as the articles he contributed to the old *Home Counties Magazine* on the palimpsest brasses of Hertfordshire. But his *magnum opus* was his *List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles* (1926), in which, as the result of many years' study, he brought up to date and entirely revised the list published in 1861 in part ii of Haines's *Manual*.

No fellow of the Society could have been better known to the generality of its fellows or more loved by them than Mill Stephenson. Not only was he, during his close on fifty years connexion with it, one of the most regular attendants at its meetings, but he was to be found almost any afternoon during its sessions at his accustomed place in that room of the library which came to be popularly known as 'Mill's parlour'. Here his advice and entirely disinterested assistance were never sought in vain by those whom he knew to be like himself genuinely in search of knowledge, although he had a wholesome distrust of those who, he suspected, merely desired to suck his brains for the sake of their own advertisement. His loss will long be felt, and he leaves a gap in the Society's ranks which will not be easily filled.

M. S. G.