

In Memoriam

PROFESSOR SIR WILLIAM HOLDSWORTH, O.M.

AFTER a long and painful illness, endured with unwavering fortitude, Sir William Holdsworth has passed from us. No teacher of law can have had a wider circle of friends in every branch of the legal profession, for his kindly disposition and ready accessibility to every one were as characteristic of him as were his great ability and boundless energy. His *History of English Law* is the greatest achievement of its kind since Pollock and Maitland's *History of English Law*. Those of us who have worked at this topic can especially appreciate the magnitude of the task that Sir William set for himself, and it is not too much to say that peculiar qualities were needed for its achievement. Any one who has written on the history of law knows how difficult it is to turn aside from the innumerable by-paths that branch off from the main road of this or that particular subject, and to call a halt to the collection of material. 'The historian essentially wants more documents than he can use.' Sir William solved the problem and gave Anglo-American lawyers a work that must form the starting-point of any research in the history of English law. We say deliberately 'the starting-point,' for the story of English law can never be complete until all the material for it is available in easily accessible form, and the accumulation of this goes on steadily through the labours of individual workers and of bodies like the Selden Society and other learned associations.

Primarily, Sir William's fame rests on his *History*, but he was interested in all the conspicuous problems of current law, as many an article from his pen proves. Like all true teachers of law, his generous encouragement of every honest effort of beginners in research was a great factor in carrying on traditions of which he himself was such an outstanding exponent.

P. H. W.