

Obituary Notice

EDWARD EARLE DORLING. Born 1864: Died 26 October 1943

Edward Earle Dorling was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1910 and was a Vice-President from 1921 to 1924. Having been educated at Clare College, Cambridge, he became in 1890 Vicar choral of Sarum, and was Master of the Choristers' school until 1900. From 1900 to 1905 he was Vicar of Burcombe, and from 1905 to 1910 curate of Ham, Surrey, but from this date he ceased to do regular parochial work. His interest in heraldic matters and his exceptional skill as a draughtsman had by this time brought him into notice, and his connexion with the *Victoria County History* dates from the early years of that great and yet unfinished enterprise. Apart from the genealogical volumes, edited by Oswald Barron, an ambitious project which was eventually abandoned, his work in the topographical sections of each county gave him an opportunity, of which he took full advantage, to produce a remarkable series of armorial drawings which not only add greatly to the appearance of the closely printed pages but will long stand as models of how heraldry should be displayed. Stories remain of the almost incredible speed and certainty of his draughtsmanship. Provided with a number of blank shields, he would fill in the charges without preliminary spacing, drawing all details free-hand with pen and ink, and making no more trouble with the crowded shield of Bohun than with the simplicity of Vere. Indeed it is said that he preferred to have half a dozen coats in hand at the same time, to give variety to his labours. When the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England was set up in 1908, another call on Dorling's special knowledge was inevitable. His work as advisor on heraldic matters is acknowledged in every volume from 1912 onwards, and he was eventually appointed a Commissioner in 1929. There was another side to his life, less familiar to Burlington House, but well known to his personal friends. He had a family connexion of long standing with the race-course at Epsom, and those who had from time to time the privilege of being his guests on Derby Day or other classic occasions have reason to remember his lavish hospitality, and what was perhaps still more engaging, his fatherly care of those who under the influence of their surroundings desired to test their intuitions in the matter of probable winners. The habitués of race meetings, he said, were splendid fellows, but nevertheless it was well not to be a mug. Looking back at his various activities, a vein of deep seriousness can be seen through all, and his devotion to his first calling—he was ordained on leaving the University—and his love of beautiful things made him a man of wide sympathies and much understanding. He spent two busy and happy years (1917–19) as Chaplain to the Forces at Richborough in the last war, a post for which he was ideally suited, and in which he came as near to the old phrase—all things to all men—as falls to the lot of any of us. As the last of a trio of heraldic artists—Barron, Kruger-Gray, Dorling—his death seems to end a period: one which marks a notable advance in public appreciation and understanding of the beautiful science to which he devoted his talents.

C. P.