

Obituary Notice

Sir Emery Walker : born 1851, died 1933. Sir Emery Walker died on Saturday, 22nd July, aged 82. A man whom the Society may well be proud to have numbered among its Fellows, he was occupied during a long and busy life with matters which, if not formally archaeological, were intimately connected with the history of our arts. Though the circumstances of his early youth were not such as to allow him the free choice of a profession, his natural bent attracted him to the craft in which he was destined to do such great things in later life. At the age of 22 he joined the Typographic Etching Company, the oldest firm of process-engravers in this country, and thirteen years later founded, in Clifford's Inn, the firm of Walker and Boutall, which under the names of Walker and Cockerell and Emery Walker, Limited, has been ever since synonymous with first-rate engraving. Such a life, after such a beginning, might well have served to excuse the absence of wide and detailed knowledge, but in Walker's case there was no need of any excuse. His many sympathies and interests made it natural to him to acquire information on all manner of subjects, and though no man could have made less parade of his learning, a conversation with him generally left the interlocutor wiser by some apt illustration or some unexpected sidelight on the matter at issue. He did not become a Fellow of the Society till 1902, but once elected soon became a familiar presence at our meetings, and served on the Council in 1908 and 1909, and again in 1917 and 1918. He was a Vice-President from 1925 to 1929. Walker's lasting claim to remembrance, among those who had not the privilege of his personal acquaintance, will rest securely on his services to printing. It was fortunate for the future of British typography that he was, from 1883 onwards, brought into close connexion with William Morris in Hammersmith. The foundation of the Kelmescott Press was the direct result of this friendship, and though Walker, for financial reasons, was never formally a partner of Morris in that famous undertaking, he was none the less intimately connected with it and concerned in everything it produced. The magnificence of the volumes and the inevitably restricted number of copies printed have already made the Kelmescott books unattainable to the ordinary buyer, but they have been the forerunners of much more fine printing, which need not be further mentioned here. After Morris's death in 1896, Walker joined with T. J. Cobden Sanderson in the starting of a new venture, the Doves Press, carried on at the same high level as before; but any notice of his work would be quite inadequate without a record of his services to what may be called ordinary printing. The improvement in the appearance of the everyday book, during the last thirty years or so, is almost a commonplace with us, but not every one is conscious of how largely the advance is due to the skill and enthusiasm of our late Fellow. No trouble was, for him, too great to take in this vital matter, and his advice was as freely given as it was widely sought.

To such a man, in whom enthusiasm and kindly spirit left no room for personal ambition, distinction, as it is ordinarily understood, counted for little and was slow in coming. It is probable that his year as Master of the Art Workers' Guild gave him as much satisfaction as anything in his life, but a knighthood in his 79th year and an honorary fellowship of a Cambridge College in his 81st were at least some evidence of an appreciation of his public services.

He had a genius for friendship. Few men can have had so many close friends in such widely different stations in life. He found the world a pleasant place because he was pleasant to all the world. C. P.