OBITUARY

ARNOLD HUGH MARTIN JONES

A. H. M. Jones died from a heart attack on a very rough crossing from Brindisi to Patras; he was on his way to give lectures at the Universities of Thessalonica and Patras. It was a tragically sudden end to a life of intense mental activity. Academically he had fulfilled his greatest ambition; for more than twenty years he had determined to complete a major work of synthesis on the late Roman Empire: the publication in 1964 of *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* will still be recognized as a major work by our grandchildren.

Hugo Jones came from Cheltenham to New College in 1922 and got his First Class in Greats in 1926. The great strength of the Greats course has always been its overriding emphasis on the original sources and the rigorous cut and thrust of the weekly tutorial; its weakness is the narrowness of the periods studied, the comparative neglect of evidence other than literary and epigraphic, and the difficulty, owing to the lack of time, of seeing the long-term processes of historical evolution. No one has ever accused Jones of underrating the importance of the original sources, but he also found his own remedies for the narrowness that the system can encourage. This was made considerably easier for him by his winning a Fellowship at All Souls College after he had taken his finals; for All Souls gave him the security to grow intellectually without having to worry about a teaching fellowship or other gainful employment. During these years of endowed freedom he read extensively, travelled widely and took part in excavations at Constantinople and Jerash, to become for many years 'Jerash Jones' to his friends. He learnt how to appreciate the geography of history, and the world of material objects: he had already acquired a considerable knowledge of medieval architecture and his accounts of the buildings of All Souls and of New College in the *Victoria County History* (a nice compound of piety and scholarship) show an impressive understanding of architectural forms and fashions. The years 1929–1934 were spent in Cairo as Reader in Ancient History and this helped to widen his horizon and incidentally explains why, in his first book, the chapter on Egypt is the best introduction to the history of Egyptian administration that has been written.

The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces (1937) was unusual for a first book and unexpected from an Oxford ancient historian. 'The object of this work is to trace the diffusion of the Greek city as a political institution through the lands bordering on the eastern Mediterranean which were included within the Roman Empire.' It was a long time since an Oxford-trained historian had recognized the Hellenistic period, and this was no superficial summary; it was a very detailed survey of the subject area by area, based almost exclusively on the literary sources and inscriptions. The project was very ambitious, the reading is not easy; the trees sometimes obscure the woods, the short sentences do not always cohere. But the judgement was already strikingly mature and this was the first comprehensive treatment of an important topic: it is good to know that a second edition is on the point of publication. The complement to this book was *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (1940), which studied the changing nature of the city in its relation with the central government and in its internal development. Here, the broad lines of development emerge clearly from the massive accumulation of evidence and the weaknesses as well as the strength of the city-system are well analysed. Meanwhile, as if to demonstrate his versatility, he had published a good short account of the Herods of Judaea (1938) and an 'instant history' of Abyssinia (1935, with Elizabeth Monroe).

In 1946 he was appointed to the chair of Ancient History in University College, London. No major work was published in this period but they were important years in the growth of the great work, which dominated his reading. Even while convalescing after a critical operation for a gastric ulcer his recurring demand was for volume after volume of Migne's *Patrologia*. But he was a Professor of Greek as well as Roman History and took the opportunity encouraged by a seminar to read all the Attic orators again. Some of the distillings are gathered together in his collected essays, *Athenian Democracy* (1960). These illustrate, as well as do his longer books, one of Jones' virtues: he had a great capacity for asking and trying to answer the simple, basic questions which are normally ignored or swept under the carpet. What precisely do we know about the relation of Boule and Assembly? What did the Theoric Fund really amount to? What is the reconstruction of Augustus' position if, in fact, Dio's account of 19 B.C. is taken seriously? One can hope also that Jones' Inaugural Lecture at London, *Ancient Economic History* (1948), will not be overlooked: it undermines a lot of pretentious nonsense by reminding us how very little we actually know of the facts, and particularly the statistical facts, of Greek and Roman economic history.

In 1951 Jones moved to Cambridge and there he was able to complete what he had begun in London. His survey of the late Empire falls into two halves. The historical outline gives a narrative of the period A.D. 287–602. Any such narrative must contain too many names and dates to be readily digested, but this account is clear and useful. The reputation of the work will, however, rest primarily

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on the long series of chapters on the social, economic and administrative aspects of the Empire. Here is great learning masterfully deployed. Few men will ever have such a firm control of such a diverse range of evidence from literary sources, inscriptions and papyri. The writing is clear and relieved by refreshing touches of humour; the analysis is penetrating. One never feels that the evidence is being straight-jacketed into a ready-made conclusion; the final summary is, in fact, perhaps too tentative. Jones is at his best when explaining the processes of government and the social context and development of institutions. He has less feeling for the ideas of an age or the more emotional side of living. But he did not set out to write about these things. Within the limits he set himself he produced not only the best account of the late Empire in the English language (and perhaps in any language) but also a rich mine from which further advance will be made into territory that has hitherto been comparatively unexplored. An essential complement to the survey will be the *Prosopography* which Jones initiated, organized and maintained. It is not the least of his achievements to have secured the finance and the assistance to undertake such an important but difficult enterprise and to have steered it towards a conclusion. He had at least the satisfaction of reading the proofs of the first volume.

Jones had some very enviable gifts. He could read very rapidly, assimilate quickly and remember astonishingly. He could crowd a very great deal of material into a very short space (as he showed not least in the *V.C.H.* account of New College, a fine piece of social and economic history). On committees he liked to get his own way, as most of us do; unlike most of us he usually succeeded—not by clever tactics or intrigue but by sheer persistence. He had little interest in small talk and never studied the art of the sub-malicious epigram. He was not suited to the large lecture-audience because he would not make concessions to those who were less interested in the subject than himself; but he was at his best in a seminar or small class, because he could listen as well as talk. To some of those who did not know him he seemed remote and cold, but those who were taught by him know how warm and generous a friend he was and how valuable was his criticism of their manuscripts.

In the preface of his first book Jones apologized to scholars whose views he may have adopted without acknowledgement: 'I have invariably gone back to the original sources, but I am conscious that I ought in many cases to have given references not only to them but also to the works of the modern scholars who first called attention to their significance.' He knew he ought to do it, but he could not change his practice. This was not arrogance and it certainly does not mean that he thought all modern works dispensable; he did in fact read voraciously. But he did not make systematic notes when he read articles and he grudged the time that orthodox footnotes would have taken. Too much attention to footnotes would have broken the flow of the main narrative; the notes for the survey were not begun until the text was finished and Sir Basil Blackwell fully deserves the thanks he receives in the preface for agreeing to begin the printing of the text before the complete work was in his hands. But from this allergy to footnotes we have gained; had he behaved in an orthodox way we should have had considerably less of Jones.

To the end he wrote almost feverishly. The short *Decline of the Ancient World* (1966) was followed by *Sparta* (1967), but the subject proved as elusive for him as it has for others. He edited two volumes of documents on Roman History (1968 and 1970); a volume on Augustus is in the press, and a full study of Roman Criminal Courts is to follow. He worked as if determined to save nothing for his literary executors to do. And readers of this *Journal* will remember that he was a busy and effective President of the Roman Society from 1952 to 1955.

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