

OBITUARIES

Sir William Foster, C.I.E.

The death of Sir William Foster on 11th May deprived the Society of the greatest authority on early Anglo-Indian history who has ever lived. He joined in 1909, served on the Council four times and as a Vice-President, and contributed occasional reviews and notes to the *Journal*, besides, in 1924, a description of the Society's pictures. Born in 1863, the son of a Civil Servant, he was educated at the Coopers' Grammar School and London University. He entered the India Office in 1882. His achievements owed much to the devoted help and encouragement of Lady Foster, daughter of the Rev. H. W. Holland, whom he married in 1911.

Almost throughout his official life he worked on the East India Company's archives. Fortunately for scholarship, Sir Arthur Wollaston, when Registrar and Superintendent of Records, gave him scope to begin the monumental calendar, *The English Factories in India*, of which he edited thirteen volumes. He became Wollaston's assistant in 1901, and succeeded him in 1907. In 1923 the post of Historiographer was temporarily revived in his honour; he held it until his retirement (1927). It is impossible even to enumerate his publications here; the British Museum catalogue contains thirty-five entries under his name. For the Hakluyt Society, of which he was Secretary (1893-1902) and President (1928-1945), he edited nine volumes, the last appearing in 1949. To an archivist's patience and exactitude he added a sense of proportion (which kept any suspicion of pedantry from his writings, however learned), and a rare gift for presenting complicated facts lucidly and attractively. His annotations to the numerous works he edited were clear, concise, and invariably useful to the reader. His wide knowledge was always at his command and at the disposal of the many who sought his help and enjoyed his fascinating conversation.

C. F. BECKINGHAM.