

JOHN PENOYRE

WHEN John Penoyre retired after thirty-four years' service as Secretary and Librarian of our Society, the following appreciation of his services appeared in the Annual Report for the Session 1935-36:

'To Mr. Penoyre's loyal devotion to its interests, and his indefatigable energy and enthusiasm, the Society has been mainly indebted for its expansion during these years, for its present efficiency, after a period of unavoidable anxiety, and for the variety of its services both to members and to Hellenic Studies generally. His re-organisation of the library, his development of the photographic collections, and the transfer of these first to Bloomsbury Square and later to the present headquarters in Bedford Square very greatly increased the facilities offered both to students and to teachers; and his concurrent administration of the two Schools of Archaeology assured intimate and efficient co-operation between these institutions and the Hellenic Society.

'By the development of the new status of Student-Associates, the younger generation of scholars has been brought into earlier enjoyment of many of the privileges of membership, and has benefited by the keen personal interest and intimate knowledge which Mr. Penoyre has



always delighted to place at the disposal of those who work in the library or draw on the Society's collection of photographs and lantern slides. With characteristic foresight and energy, Mr. Penoyre announced his impending retirement a full year in advance, to minimise dislocation of routine, and to enable him to devote the current session to the revision and completion of those departments of the Society's library which owe most to his personal interest and special knowledge.

'The Council takes this opportunity to record the gratitude of the Society to Mr. Penoyre for his long and invaluable services and to wish him health and long enjoyment of the leisure to which he now looks forward.'

This tribute, alike in its content and its wording, so admirably summarises John Penoyre's services to the Hellenic Society and to its library that any addition to it can be justified only by striking a more personal note. If we try to recall an impression of him in action, it is unquestionably his energy and enthusiasm that we first remember. The energy was never obtruded: he always seemed busy doing something to improve the library, or the photographs or the slide-collections, and for many years he spent much of his week-end leisure in this task. It was then that he could be free from the interruptions of readers and visitors, to whom in working hours he always seemed to find time to offer help or a patient ear. It was a controlled and methodical energy, based on most careful planning, the fruits of which, in addition to the organisation of the two moves of the library mentioned above, are to be seen and appreciated in his Subject Index and in the systematic expansion of the Author Catalogue.

His enthusiasm was by no means limited to the administration and improvement of the library,

for in the field of Greek art he had a wide knowledge and genuine aesthetic appreciation. The same enthusiasm found wider outlets when he travelled in Greek lands, first as a student of the British School in 1900–1 and again in 1907 when he spent a long summer alone in Thasos, undertaking a topographical survey of the island and making valuable discoveries of architectural remains, sculpture and inscriptions, all described, with his own plans, drawings, and photographs, in *JHS* XXVIII (1908). Staying at the School at Athens before and after this journey he was able to keep in close touch with its activities and to see something of the excavations at Sparta in which he always took the keenest interest. Being also Secretary of the School at the time this was a valuable addition to his experience and to his many qualifications for this post. Having these responsibilities towards two committees, he had no difficulty in showing that he was equally at home in librarianship and in committee-work, although the necessary gifts for these activities do not always coincide. But he seemed to have them in full, and his genial and conciliatory manner was not a screen for weakness or indecision. He made up his mind clearly when faced with, or consulted on, problems concerning the Society or the British School, and his judgement was seldom at fault. Sometimes, one felt, he took these matters almost too much to heart, and this sensitive conscientiousness contributed without doubt to the serious breakdown in health that followed on his exertions in carrying through the move to Bloomsbury Square in 1909–10. His idea of a rest-cure, which dismayed his friends at the time, was to cross the Andes and make his way down the Amazon, with native guides only; but in the result he came back cured and eager to resume his duties, though he seldom chose to speak of his experiences.

It would be a great mistake to infer from this adventure that he liked solitude, for he was fond of company and good talk, and always interested in the young; to his encouragement of Student Associates reference has been made above. He was a lover of the countryside and of music; and that he parted with his pianola (never to be replaced) when he turned his rooms in the Temple into a depot for the collection and despatch of sweaters for the troops in the First World War is typical of his devotion to the task in hand. Many will recall the wit and persuasiveness of his letters to *The Times* in this connexion, and those who knew him recognised them as typical of the man. They revealed that blend of personal modesty and pride in doing his job efficiently which characterised all his work. It was only natural that the respect so inspired should develop into friendship, though this was not offered cheaply, and he was deeply pained by any lack of considerateness, whether in the library or elsewhere.

In conclusion, a reminiscence which his friends will appreciate. In the General Strike of 1926 he applied, characteristically, for some task in the emergency. Queuing with many younger applicants (for he had already passed his fifty-fifth birthday), he was asked by the interviewing official whether he could drive a car; on replying that he could not, he was asked brusquely, 'Well, what can you do?', and the reply came promptly, 'I can sweep out a railway-carriage or run a Government Office.' Neither offer was accepted, but he would certainly have lived up to his promise, for his creed was that any task, large or small, is worth doing with all one's powers. And it was his steady adherence to this creed that made Penoyre render such memorable services to the Hellenic Society, which now laments his passing.

A. M. W.