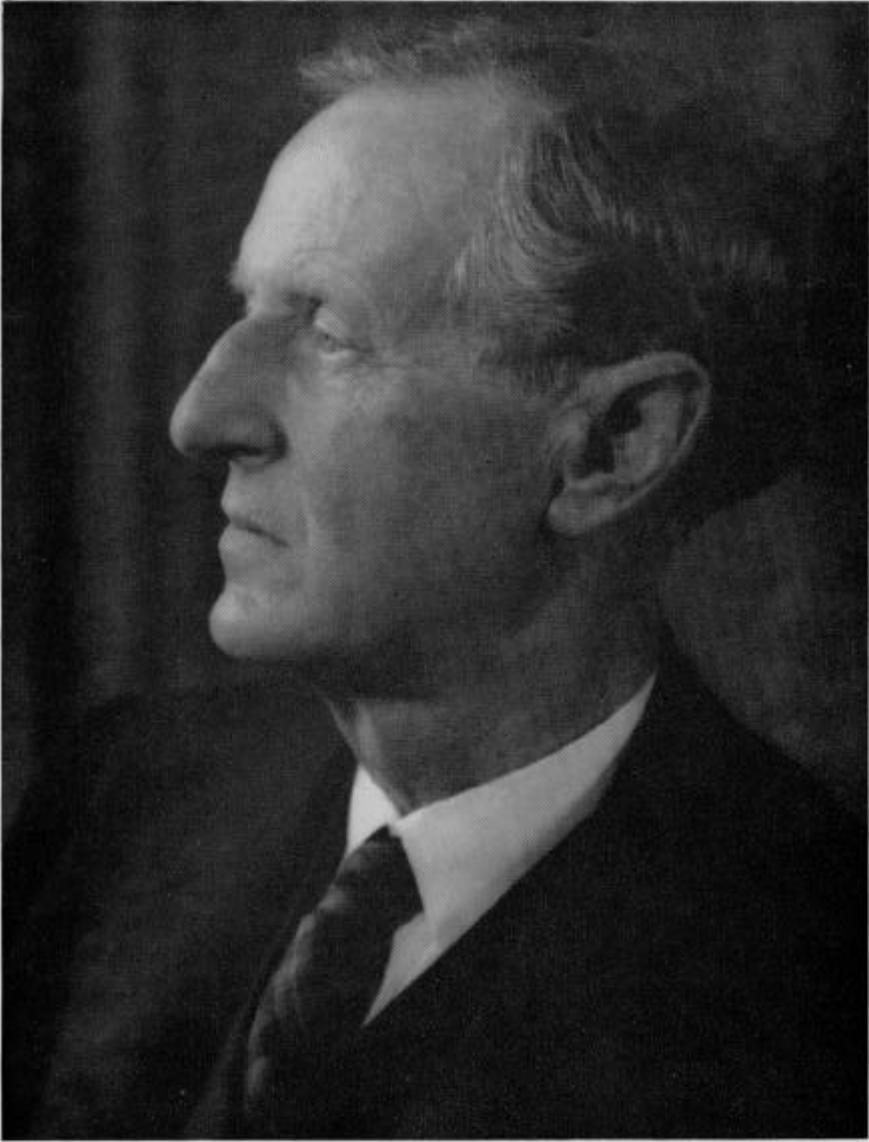


PLATE XXXIII



WILLIAM LAUGHTON LORIMER

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1885-1967

WILLIAM LAUGHTON LORIMER was born in 1885, the seventh of the eight children of Robert Lorimer, Free Church minister of the parish of Mains and Strathmartine in Forfarshire (now Angus). On his father's side his forebears had been farmers in Dumfriesshire. His grandfather and great-grandfather had been ministers of the Church of Scotland; both had withdrawn when the Free Church was formed in 1843, an event which subjected the family to some financial strain but enriched it by implanting the conviction (securely transmitted from each generation to the next), that the individual should expect certain standards from authority and may transfer his allegiance if he judges that authority has failed him. His grandfather had a high reputation as a scholar and theologian; his father, though he published less, was also scholarly, and not a man to whom the outward expression of deep feeling came easily; his mother, born Isabella Lockhart Robertson, daughter and granddaughter of men who had served the Honourable East India Company with distinction, was talented and energetic.

Rather as R. G. Collingwood, chancing at the age of 8 on a translation of Kant's *Grundlegung*, was possessed by a feeling that 'the contents of this book . . . were somehow my business', Lorimer gave early evidence of his passion for language by beginning when he was 9 to collect material (now lost) on the dialect of Strathmartine.

He was educated first at Dundee High School and then at Fettes, where he made many lasting friendships after an initial period of unhappiness and became head of the school in 1903-4. He won an Open Scholarship in Classics to Trinity College, Oxford, in 1904. The change of environment brought to life in him at least two serious conflicts: between the world as his father saw it and the world as it looked through his own eyes a long way from home; and between acquiescence in his mother's ambitions for her children (dazzlingly realized by his elder brothers and sister) and his awareness that he was an individual with responsibilities to himself. These conflicts contributed to the neurosis which struck him down in his first year at Oxford.

He could not take Mods, and went off to Italy to stay for a whole winter with a cousin who was married to Hugh Crichton-Miller, a young doctor destined for distinction as a psychiatrist. This period was a great gain to him. He came to know Italy and its people intimately and acquired perfect fluency in Italian; he revisited Italy in 1922 and 1950, found time (even daily, after his retirement) to keep up with the Italian press, and in the Second World War did much for the well-being of Italian prisoners of war, who have not forgotten him.

It may well have been at the time of his breakdown (and if not then, it was soon after) that he found he did not have adequate reasons for accepting as true the religious propositions which had been taken for granted in his upbringing. He remained an unobtrusive agnostic for the rest of his life, but his theological detachment was neither impartial nor ill-informed. He has been called a 'Presbyterian agnostic', for Protestant appeal to conscience, even to an eccentric or anarchic conscience, was as congenial to him as Catholic deference to spiritual authority was contemptible. He had a remarkable knowledge of the history of Christianity from the first century to the twentieth (his first three and his penultimate publications were concerned with Christian texts). The more he learned (and, as is clear from the record which he kept of his reading after his retirement, ἐγήρασκεν πολλά διδασκόμενος), the more Christianity as an object of study fascinated him, but it does not appear that his respect for it as an operative force in human life increased.

Back at Oxford in 1906, better but not cured (he slept very badly and feared strong light), he read Greats and missed a First. As he had none of the prizes which would have put him in the running for a college fellowship, and very few junior posts were available in universities in those days (he considered but declined the offer of a Chair of Philosophy in an Indian university), he held private tutorships for two years. Then in 1910 he became Assistant to John Burnet in the Department of Greek at St. Andrews, and was promoted Lecturer the following year. Burnet was an inspiring mentor, and Lorimer's heart was captured, as he walked in the afternoons round the spacious countryside which nowhere lay more than half a mile from the centre of St. Andrews, by what he later called the *genius loci*. He was in the army for the first year of the First World War, and, after severe pneumonia, in the Intelligence Directorate of the War Office from 1916 to 1919. In 1915 he married Marion

Rose Gordon, who had been one of his students; this happy marriage was tragically cut short by his wife's death in 1922, just after their only son's fourth birthday.

Affection for St. Andrews by no means extinguished desire for professional advancement, and he applied unsuccessfully for the Chair of Greek at Cape Town in 1918. Burnet retired in 1926. Lorimer's desire for the Chair of Greek at St. Andrews was very strong, and there is no room for doubt that he was the man by whom Burnet hoped to be succeeded (a view which A. E. Taylor shared); but in 1927 the University Court appointed H. J. Rose. Lorimer became and remained a loyal and generous friend of the man whose appointment had been so grievous a blow to him. A private letter which he wrote shortly after his first meeting with Rose, a letter entirely free from unmanly complaint or accusation, illustrates equally his magnanimity and his shrewdness. He thought himself inferior to Rose as a scholar and found him agreeably 'open and straightforward', but also predicted that Rose would not be the most compliant of professors in his dealings with Principal, Court, and Senate.

In 1929 Lorimer was put in charge of the teaching of Latin in what was then University College, Dundee, with the status of Reader and permission to live in St. Andrews. This was academic exile, for in Dundee there was no Latin Honours class and no Greek at all. In the same year he married again, but this marriage was not lasting and was a time of great unhappiness for him.

He applied for three more chairs: Greek at Aberdeen in 1931, Greek at Belfast in 1934, and Humanity at St. Andrews in 1937. All three applications failed, and his disappointment at Belfast was sharpened by the fact that the decision to appoint T. A. Sinclair was taken at a very late stage, when Lorimer had good reason to believe that only formal assent to his own appointment was wanting. St. Andrews eventually made amends. He resisted the entreaty of some of his oldest friends to accept the Chair of Humanity in 1947, wisely and coolly deciding that even a man equally accomplished (as he was) as Latinist and Hellenist must find the obligations of a Professor of Humanity oppressive when his interest and affection are primarily engaged by Greek. But Rose retired from the Chair of Greek in 1953, and Lorimer, simultaneously with his election as a Fellow of the British Academy, joined for the last two years of his academic employment the company which had included Burnet and his own distant relative Lewis Campbell.

As a teacher he was exceedingly thorough; he treated every lecture as a work of art which must stand public scrutiny, but, like Demosthenes, he used his artistry to create an impression of effortless lucidity. In lecturing on a text he devoted more time to linguistic accuracy than is now acceptable, recognizing that a man should do most what he does best, and believing (reasonably enough) that one is unlikely to say much of value about an author unless one cares what the author actually said. He generalized with the greatest diffidence, and *odium philologicum* was absolutely alien to him. He cared very much that the answer to a problem should be found; if he also cared that it was he who had found it, he betrayed this only by a sparkle in the eye. Students who like their instructor to be affected continuously and obviously by beauty in literature may have been disappointed, for his attitude on the whole (some vividly remembered occasions make this reservation necessary) was one which has been unwisely neglected by aesthetic theory: in work and recreation alike he tended to regard literature and the other arts as a stimulus to inquiry and reflection, but beauty as the prerogative of nature.

With one very important exception, he took little part in the administration of the University, for his view of its purpose and future was irreconcilable with that of Sir James Irvine (Principal 1921–52). The exception was his forty years of service on the University Library Committee. The Library owes more than can now be calculated to the speed, tireless energy, and accurate memory which he brought to bear on the catalogues and second-hand stocks of booksellers anywhere in the world.

Lorimer's major contribution to Classical studies was his work on the pseudo-aristotelian *De Mundo*. Two preliminary monographs, *The Text Tradition of Pseudo-Aristotle 'De Mundo'* and *Some Notes on the Text of Pseudo-Aristotle 'De Mundo'*, were published in 1924 and 1925 respectively as Nos. XVIII and XXI in the series *St. Andrews University Publications*; the *Text Tradition* contained also an edition of the medieval Latin versions of the work. His edition of the Greek text, equipped with a necessarily elaborate *apparatus criticus* and described by Sir David Ross (*Classical Review*, xl [1926], 70 f.) as a 'splendid' and 'palmary' edition, appeared in 1933: *Aristotelis qui fertur Libellus De Mundo* (Paris, Les Belles Lettres), together with Eduard König's German translation of the Syriac version of the last three chapters. His second edition of the Latin versions, founded on a fresh

evaluation of the manuscripts and affording throughout evidence of the care with which he had reconsidered every word, was published in 1951 (Rome, Libreria dello Stato) as fascicle xi. 1. 2 of *Aristoteles Latinus* in the *Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi*.

He remarked in the preface to *Some Notes* that the *De Mundo* seemed to him 'peculiarly suited to serve as a *corpus vile* for beginners in textual criticism'. He probably meant by 'beginners' scholars at the outset of their professional careers, for it is difficult to imagine a student who would not be daunted and bewildered by a textual tradition of such complexity. Lorimer's judgement on the interrelation of the manuscripts was that division into 'families' was impossible; it was practicable only to 'arrange them in looser aggregates' (*Text Tradition*, 8); 'I believe', he said (*ibid.* 34), 'that there was from the very first a continual criss-crossing of the lines of tradition, and that by consequence all variants in our independent MSS. are potentially of any antiquity.' In *Some Notes*, 20-35, he formulated a tentative theory in which the 'aggregates' were more closely defined, and he confirmed this theory (with one slight modification) in his 1933 edition (8-15), but added there a strong warning against too great a reliance on the boundaries which he had adumbrated. One of the most remarkable features of the *De Mundo* is the richness of the indirect tradition, which Lorimer investigated thoroughly and used to very good effect. He was capable of forming an opinion of his own on some passages in the Armenian version (cf. the 1933 edition, 20 n. 1), and, given his habitual modesty, we should attach some weight to the words 'all but' in his remark (*Text Tradition*, 24 n. 1) on the Syriac version: 'I am all but entirely dependent on the work of the Swiss scholar, V. Ryssel.' His note on Clement of Rome in *Journal of Theological Studies*, xlii (1946), 70, reveals that he had some knowledge of Coptic. His abiding interest in the indirect tradition of Greek texts is apparent also in his article 'Plato in Afghanistan and India' (*American Journal of Philology*, liii [1932], 157-61), a disarming title for a discussion of some textual problems in the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*.

One important lesson could be learnt from *Some Notes* by any 'beginner', or by any of the eloquent detractors of Classical scholarship who seem to think that textual criticism begins and ends with palaeography and grammar: the lesson that variant or suspect readings in a text such as the *De Mundo* cannot profitably be discussed by a critic who is not thoroughly

acquainted with ancient science, geography, philosophy, and religion. Lorimer's acquaintance was thorough, as he showed, for example, in his investigation of ancient opinions on the relative sizes of Britain and Ceylon (*Some Notes*, 37-43) as a contribution towards decision between the variants 'less' and 'not less' in *De Mundo* 393^a14. He did not plan a continuous commentary, because he hoped (*Some Notes*, ix) that Wilhelm Capelle, whose article 'Die Schrift von der Welt' had been published in 1905, would write one. Capelle was 84 when Lorimer retired, and obviously unlikely to execute what he had once projected, but Lorimer felt by then, as one must feel after working on one text for many years, that he had had enough of the *De Mundo*. His second edition of the Latin versions, although not published until 1951, had in fact been completed in 1935. It is noteworthy that there are no marginal notes in his off-print of H. Strohm's article 'Studien zur Schrift von der Welt' (*Museum Helveticum*, ix [1952], 137-75).

He was an exemplary reviewer, always succinct and often witty (though not at the expense of the author under review), and he subjected himself to a discipline which does not come naturally to reviewers. When he reviewed a very bad book, he conveyed the truth to his readers with perfect clarity but—save on a single occasion—without an intemperate or discourteous word. Once, when he had good reason to describe an author's hypothesis as 'incredible' he added 'if I have understood him aright'; and his use of 'I dare say' was masterly. In noting (*Classical Review*, n.s. xii [1952], 94) that Schwyzer's *Griechische Grammatik* was inadequate on $\tau\upsilon\chi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega = \tau\upsilon\chi\alpha\nu\omega \acute{\omega}\nu$ he refrained from mentioning that this inadequacy could have been rectified by perusal of his own article on the subject in *Classical Quarterly*, xx (1926), 195-200. His review of Björck's $\text{HN } \Delta\text{I}\Delta\text{A}\Sigma\text{K}\Omega\text{N}$ (*Classical Review*, lv [1941], 86) was the only one which he used as a pretext for the exposition of matter not strictly and immediately relevant to the author's argument; the quality of this exception makes one wish that his self-discipline had been laxer. His review of Denniston's *Greek Particles* (*Classical Review*, xlvii [1934], 221-3), a book which he recognized as 'a really great work of scholarship', was the beginning of a long and fruitful correspondence, in which he suggested many of the corrections and additions which were noted by Denniston and incorporated in the second edition. Lorimer's many contributions to the new Greek Lexicon, highly regarded by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, cannot now be identified (*Classical*

Review, lvi [1942], 122 n. 2, mentions an isolated example); he continued (e.g. *Classical Review*, liv [1940], 187) to furnish material for a future supplement to the lexicon.

It is not clear just when or under what circumstances he first took up the serious study of Scots, which had attracted him in boyhood.¹ In the inter-war years he had a collection of Scottish texts, small by comparison with the superb classical and general library which he had accumulated, and not more than any educated Scotsman might be expected to possess. But some time, apparently about the end of the war, he seems to have conceived the idea of translating some, at least, of the New Testament into Scots. It was of course the lack of any such translation at the Reformation (Nisbet's version of 1520 never having been in circulation) that brought the English Genevan Bible to Scotland, one of the greatest influences in ousting Scots as the national language. There was nothing new in the idea of remedying the deficiency, for in the middle of the last century several books of the Bible had been translated: St. Matthew by Henry Scott Riddell, the poet (this was commissioned by Prince Lucien Bonaparte as part of an investigation into the various dialects of Britain), the Psalms and Isaiah by Hatley Waddel, and Ruth by Sir James Murray of the *O.E.D.*; and a whole Scots Testament by a Canadian Scot, W. W. Smith, appeared in 1901. Lorimer was dissatisfied with the artificial and eclectic nature of most of these, and no doubt the authentic echoes of the voices of the old ladies of Strathmartine were beginning to sound again more clearly in his ears as he grew older. But his translation was obviously more than a linguistic *tour de force*; it was rather an act of piety, a tribute to the traditions of his country, and the faith in which he had been brought up.

The newly found interest in Scots involved him by accident in a fresh field of activity. A casual consultation of the *Scottish National Dictionary* sometime in the early part of 1946 revealed an omission to which he drew the attention of the then editor, William Grant. Grant, in acknowledging the correction, invited him to send a note of anything else that he might come across of use to the Dictionary; and from that time he became a regular contributor of instances of word-usage to the Dictionary's material. Soon after, when Grant retired and a new editor was appointed, Lorimer became a reader of the typescripts of

¹ I am greatly indebted to Mr. David Murison, Editor of the *Scottish National Dictionary*, for this and the following two paragraphs.

provisional articles circulated among a group of dialect authorities whose business is to corroborate, amend, or add to the information they contain. This information is then collated on the copy for the printer; the readers undertake in effect a kind of voluntary sub-editing. For twenty years Lorimer continued this work with his wonted prodigious thoroughness and accuracy, applying to it the same exacting standards of scholarship he had brought to bear in his work for the revision of Liddell and Scott, seeking out new sources, supplying better examples of usage, and noting errors or omissions, so that there can be hardly a page that does not contain some contribution from him. He began to hunt the catalogues and shelves of second-hand booksellers for obscure authors, and in a few years had amassed a large collection of the more out-of-the-way texts, some of them unique or exceedingly rare copies. These he excerpted with great care, and little escaped him; he noted not merely words but constructions, phrases and idioms, rhymes, the stock-in-trade of phonology, odd spellings, and so on. His particular interest in the Greek particles alerted him to similar usages in Scots, and one thinks in this connexion of his acute and invaluable study of the quasi-enclitic *na*, by which the relevant articles in the *S.N.D.* are so much the richer. He was in fact compiling a lexicon of his own, almost a thesaurus, from which he generously supplied the Dictionary where it was necessary; and it is now clear that this intense study of Scots was at the same time serving his other purpose, the translation of the New Testament. Only a few of his friends were permitted to know of the translation and to make criticisms and suggestions. He got through the shorter epistles with remarkable speed and ease; then came the gospels, in which he differentiated by dialectal nuances between Nazarenes, Samaritans, and Judaeans; Acts and Revelation were not an easy task, and finally he tackled the really difficult epistles, Romans and Hebrews, which he just managed to finish before his death. All this work was based on a careful review of the original texts and a study of the commentaries in cases of difficulty. He was most chary of following in the tracks of previous translators, and preferred to work from scratch on the principles he had laid down for himself at the outset. On the other hand, he carefully scrutinized some ninety or a hundred translations in about twenty languages. His manuscript list shows that these included Latin translations (five), English (twenty-five), German (nine, including Schwyzer-Tüütsch), Swedish (three), Danish (four), Norwegian (four,

including Landsmål), Dutch (eight, including Afrikaans and Flemish); and besides French, Spanish, Italian, and Rumanian, he had consulted versions in Faeroese, Frisian, the various Rhaeto-Romansch dialects, and Provençal—a token of his interest in the minority tongues of Europe. The task was indeed a formidable one: to try to convey, in the sadly dilapidated fragments of what had ceased to be a full language more than 200 years before, Paul's obscure conflation—in which even Peter found 'some things which are hard to be understood'—of Hebrew theology and Hellenistic philosophy. Purist though he was (and he has been heard even to anathematize Burns for anglicisms) he was compelled to relax some of his own rules and in practice to admit some archaisms, as indeed anyone must who tries to reconstruct Scots. Those who are familiar with the result think he has succeeded remarkably well. Final judgement must await the publication of the whole. It is sufficient to say meanwhile that of the many writers who have attempted the writing of a fuller Scots, 'Lallans', or whatever it may be called, he was one of the very few who knew what the linguistic problems really are and how to go systematically about their solution; and he was the first to tackle on a grand scale the writing of serious prose, in which Scots has been deficient for three centuries.

His interest in the Dictionary was not, however, confined to the editorial side. In 1947 he joined the Executive Council of the Association which publishes the work, and became its Chairman in 1953. He took a leading part in the negotiations which brought the work under the surveillance and patronage of the Scottish Universities and in effect saved it from financial breakdown. His concern for its progress was constant and devoted, and was maintained to the end of his last illness. To him it was a labour of love, the expression of his passion for his native land, and he communicated his zeal to all who were associated with him in the work.

He devoted little time to Gaelic, but his article on the chronology of the displacement of Gaelic by Scots in Galloway and Carrick (*Scottish Gaelic Studies* vi [1949], 113–36, and vii [1951], 26–46) is a masterpiece; the technique which it displays in the discovery, interpretation, and presentation of evidence could profitably be studied by those embarking on research in any branch of linguistic history.

Those of his notebooks which are now deposited in the University Library at St. Andrews include eleven devoted to

the interpretation of passages of Greek and Latin literature, three to the Greek language, and seven mainly on theological and historical topics. A preliminary examination has shown that it will not be possible to extract and prepare for publication anything comparable with John Jackson's *Marginalia Scaenica*. Lorimer did not, indeed, envisage publication of his notes in their present form. In striking contrast to his style in articles and reviews, they seem designed for reading without recourse to one's bookshelves; he commonly transcribed a *catena* of inadequate translations or excerpts from commentaries before coming to the point which he wished to make, and in some cases a whole page of modern poetry or narrative was transcribed in order to draw attention to a similarity (not always remarkable) between ancient and modern sentiments or practices. The positive contribution made by the notebooks is therefore smaller than would at first sight appear. The important lexicographical and syntactical element is largely dispersed, and even in those three notebooks in which it is concentrated classification of the material is either inchoate or absent. Nevertheless, the eventual publication of the hard core of this work is greatly to be desired, for Lorimer combined to a high degree the virtues of Denniston, Bruhn, and the Swedish school; he had read very widely, his power of recall was efficient, and he had an uncommonly sharp eye for linguistic phenomena which escape the conventional grammarian.

One might have expected that the character of a man who had suffered so many misfortunes and disappointments would have foundered in bitterness or apathy. His did not; but it possessed a distinctive emotional colour. He often spoke as if he regarded the Border as a fast-decaying rampart designed by nature to protect good from evil, and as if the Catholic Church were incapable of truthful utterance or action from honest motives. It would be incorrect to speak of these views as 'assumptions', for his notebooks suggest that he was under an emotional compulsion to prove them true (not utterly different from his compulsion to disprove the venerable dictum that ἄρα μή 'expects a negative answer', but admitting, perhaps, less rigorous standards of evidence); to call them 'prejudices' would be to betray unawareness of the distinction between prejudice and judgement, to say nothing of insensitivity to the history of minorities; the interaction of traditional loyalties and rationalization in him was never simple. He would never have hurt or insulted a friend or a guest knowingly; but there were times

when an obsessive element intruded into his conversation and a perceptive interlocutor would lapse into laconic acquiescence until the subject could be changed. Two of his former colleagues still wonder what they did to earn his lasting displeasure. He could be implacable; the breach between him and Sir James Irvine was never healed, and after the University Court had decided in 1961 not to reappoint him to the Library Committee some of those who were members of the Court at the time found that he did not speak to them again.

Since English influence on the Scottish universities increased greatly during his lifetime, it was not easy to distinguish between his resistance to changes which were of alien origin and resistance to changes which the passage of time brought to Scotland, England, and other countries impartially. He discouraged his students from indiscriminate browsing, disagreed with the increase of readers' tables and open shelves in the University Library, organized his Departmental Library in such a way as to suggest that the purpose of a library is to protect books against those who might wish to read them, and in his own study put his Loeb translations where a visitor would not notice them. He had no use for typewriters and duplicators, so that much routine work which by 1953 was generally regarded as contributing to efficient teaching was either not done at all or was done, expensively, by printers. He regarded tutorial systems of all kinds as harmful to the moral and intellectual development of students. This view was not so much authoritarian in origin as egalitarian, for he respected his pupils as persons (many of them cherish the memory of his approachability, sympathy, and hospitality) and he thought that tutorials rarely demanded enough of the teacher; yet it is surprising that he did not get to grips with the question whether the same methods of instruction were equally appropriate to all aspects of a subject and all categories of student.

In describing some aspects of his attitude and practice as Head of a Department it would be wrong to use any word but 'prejudice'; yet all his prejudices are a feather in the scale when weighed against his integrity and vitality. As a parent and grandparent he showed such qualities that most of us would be well pleased to be half as good. He was so far from indiscriminate conservatism that he read, understood, and respected Freud before the First World War (one discerns here the influence of Hugh Crichton-Miller), and between the wars he was a close friend of Ian Suttie; and in old age (unlike some of his con-

temporaries, to whom one may apply Plato's dictum that the real tragedy of ignorance is the failure to recognize that one is ignorant) he expressed the opinion that psychiatry was the great and lasting achievement of this century. His conversation was elegant without affectation, fluent without febrility, and gay without superficiality, concise and vivid in reminiscence, quick and penetrating in discussion. It was said of him in his seventies, 'He is the youngest of us all', and until a few months before his death his upright carriage, rapid stride, and steady eyes (he had been memorably handsome as a younger man) were no less remarkable than his inexhaustible capacity for being interested and interesting.

If there is any single 'key' to the life and character of a man who flagged so seldom in the exercise of talents so rich, it is this: while he never made unreasonable demands on the weak and humble, he took it for granted that he had no right to spare himself, and he expected absolute integrity in those who accept power and responsibility. If his standards were old-fashioned, we can only hope that they will not prove to have been the exclusive possession of the past.

K. J. DOVER