REGINALD CAMPBELL THOMPSON

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1876–1941

THE subject of this memoir, Reginald Campbell Thompson, was born on 21 August 1876 at Cranley Place, South Kensington, being the eldest of the five children, four sons and one daughter, of Reginald Edward Thompson, M.D., F.R.C.P., and his wife Anne Isabella De Morgan.

Several of Thompson's near ancestors, both paternal and maternal, deserve a brief notice; for heredity accounts for much in his character and career.

Thompson's maternal great-grandfather William Frend (1757–1841), Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, was an Anglican clergyman who vacated the living of Madingley near Cambridge on becoming a Unitarian, and who in retirement made himself a proficient Hebrew scholar but was chiefly famous as a prolific writer on scientific subjects and as a reformer. His maternal grandfather, Augustus De Morgan (1803–71), a son of Colonel De Morgan of the Indian Army and of his wife who was a granddaughter of James Dodson, the author of the *Mathematical Canon*, had a distinguished career at Cambridge, where he graduated fourth Wrangler in 1837. Though a notable mathematician, he obtained no post there; for, rebelling against the rigid Evangelicalism of his parents, he became heterodox but remained a convinced theist with a leaning towards Unitarianism while calling himself an 'unattached Christian'. After attempting the law and giving it up with dislike, he became first Professor of Mathematics at University College, London (1828–66), which was just being started; he became a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and was a voluminous writer on mathematical and philosophical subjects. His brother Campbell Greig De Morgan (1811–76) was a noted surgeon in his day.

Dr. Thompson (1834–1912), the father of the Assyriologist, was a son of Mr. Sergeant Thompson, and was educated at Brighton College and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he proceeded B.A., and St. George's Hospital in London, where he took the degree of M.B. in 1860; in 1862 he became a member of the Royal College of Physicians and proceeded M.D. in 1863. He was by birth and inclination a Londoner but also a man of wide interests which in the early 'sixties led him to accompany the then Viscount Milton to shoot buffalo in the Canadian

North-West at a time when Canada was still to a considerable extent a *terra incognita* even to Canadians. On returning to England he became Medical Registrar of St. George's Hospital, working there throughout an epidemic of typhus which he himself contracted; while lying ill he compiled notes of his symptoms and recovered to make use of the experience thus gained. He was the author also of several works on the diseases of the chest. In 1868 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and in 1869 was appointed Assistant Physician to the Brompton Hospital for Consumptives, of which he was Physician from 1880 to 1894 and Consulting Physician from 1894 to 1901; he was also, from 1871 to 1873, Physician to the Seamen's Hospital at Greenwich, and he became in 1880 Secretary and in 1883 Vice-President of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society. He was a learned but genial physician, making his home in a fairly spacious and detached house, long since demolished to make room for a school, in Lillie Road at West Brompton; he retired early from general practice but retained work as a consulting physician and a medical referee to several companies for a number of years. His wife, Anne Isabella De Morgan, was on the maternal side granddaughter of William Frend the reformer, already mentioned; her father was the mathematician Professor Augustus De Morgan, also already mentioned, and her brother was William De Morgan, potter and novelist. Two of her five children, a son and a daughter, died in infancy, and upon her own death in 1885 the upbringing of the three surviving sons fell entirely on the father. He was fortunately assisted in this task by Alice Pennington, who had entered his service as a nurse when the first child was only a month old and remained with the family till old Dr. Thompson's death at 13 Cheyne Gardens, Chelsea, on 10 September 1912, when she retired on an annuity; but she maintained close contact with his family till her death in 1938 at the advanced age of 94 years.

Heredity played no small part in moulding the characters of Dr. Thompson's three boys. The mathematical tastes and abilities of their great-grandfather William Frend and their grandfather Augustus De Morgan came out strongly in the second son, Augustus Perronet Thompson, who in October 1898 entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, as a scholar and became fifth Wrangler, winning also the Smith's Prize which is awarded annually to 'those candidates who shall present the essay of greatest merit on any subject in mathematics or natural philosophy'; his early death by a drowning accident in the Cam

shortly after this event cut off a most promising career. The same factors, combined with the presence of several lawyers and public men of some eminence in the family in the early nineteenth century, account for the choice of a career by the third son, Edward Vincent Thompson, C.B., who, after joining King's College and taking his degree at Cambridge, became a solicitor and entered the Solicitor's Department of the Treasury, where he became Principal Assistant Solicitor in 1941. Finally, there was on both sides of the family a background of sturdy independence of thought and judgement, especially in regard to religious problems, which, combined with the outlook of Cambridge in the 'nineties of the last century, will explain the agnosticism of the eldest boy.

At home Dr. Thompson encouraged his three boys to indulge their interests, intellectual and athletic, to their utmost ability. Here the eldest Thompson made a museum containing his collection of flints and similar objects, all carefully catalogued by his own hand. The house contained also some fine specimens of Persian pottery of which the boy grew proud as he learned to appreciate works of art; and there was also a piano in the mathematical son's study, a room where the boys could play billiards, and a gymnasium. At the same time books came in abundance to the house, whether bought or borrowed from the London Library, so that ample provision was made for the educational needs of all three boys. Dr. Thompson, equally solicitous for their physical welfare, saw that they had plenty of opportunity for change of air and occupation whenever it might be necessary. He would give them an outing in London, accompanying them to a play or a billiards match, or he would take them sailing on the Thames or shooting in Scotland; and at one time he had a cottage in Cornwall where they spent a great part of their holidays. Thus Thompson became an enthusiastic yachtsman and an accomplished marksman, while he acquired the muscular frame and burly form to belie the scholar's tastes which his ancestry alone explained.

Thompson, as a young boy, was sent to the preparatory school now called Colet Court, and he stayed there till 1889 when, like his brothers after him, he entered St. Paul's School. The High Master was then Mr. Frederick William Walker (M.A., Oxon., Hon. D.Litt., Manch.), for whom Dr. Thompson entertained a high regard. Thompson walked daily to the school, which was about a mile's walk from their home. He was indeed unusually strong for his age, being already on entering the school an excellent

swimmer, and he paid some attention to gymnastic exercises at which, however, he never became sufficiently expert to gain a place in the team representing the school in the Public Schools' Competition at Aldershot. He was not, indeed, built to be a gymnast or a runner and regarded physical fitness rather as a moral obligation than as a sport; such exercises bored him, and he used them merely as a means of keeping himself fit. He was also a keen member of the Cadet Corps, which often obtained permission to be drilled in the large grounds of Beaufort House not far from Lillie Road, and became supreme at rifle-shooting; he was by far the best marksman in the school and captain of the Eight. He took, however, no part in games of ball, of which indeed he always spoke rather slightingly; but games were not then compulsory at St. Paul's, and the boys were left entirely to themselves to pursue what sport they liked.

St. Paul's, as a day-school, exercised control over the boys only in school-hours and left Saturday to them as a free day. Thompson, like most Paulines, was on the classical side, and he rose steadily if not rapidly for a reason that ultimately became public; and he was not too well known beyond the Cadet Corps for the same reason. He was in fact already beginning to devote all his leisure to the self-chosen task of mastering the cuneiform inscriptions exhibited in the British Museum, and so he would at times appear in school carrying a stout manuscript volume of cuneiform texts copied by himself for surreptitious study when he ought perhaps to have been giving his time and attention to a Greek or Latin author. One or two intimate friends knew of this mysterious hobby, but none had means of judging how far it was serious. At length the mystery was revealed. In 1894 Thompson offered some translations made by himself from Assyrian texts for a Smee Prize annually awarded for work of an inventive or original kind. These translations were not eligible for the particular prize; but Walker, on hearing of them, immediately submitted them to the authorities at the Museum and, learning that they were the work of a genuine Assyriologist, induced the Governors of the School to award a special prize of £10 in books to Thompson. The note-book containing this work, still extant, contains copies of fifteen texts from the collections of Ashurbanipal copied in the cuneiform script, transliterated into the Roman alphabet and translated with a brief introduction and a glossary. The texts were not copied directly from the original tablets, to which a schoolboy would not have access, but were taken from copies accessible in published works,

though only in cuneiform script at that time; what was new were the transliterations and translations which reflected quite unusual, possibly unique, industry and knowledge in so young a scholar. The interest of this exploit was enhanced by the fact that the selected texts were for the most part letters which presented unusual difficulties of style and content. It was an incident dear to the heart of Walker, who never failed to recognize a scholar, and he at once took Thompson out of his classical form and set him to Hebrew studies with a view to going up to Cambridge; and shortly afterwards Thompson was elected to an open exhibition at Caius College, where he went into residence in the following autumn.

Thompson entered Caius on 21 October 1895 and proceeded to read Oriental (Hebrew and Aramaic) Languages; in 1897 he won the Stewart of Rannoch Hebrew Scholarship and in 1898 he was put by the examiners in the First Class in the Oriental Tripos. At the same time he kept up his other interests, being an enthusiastic Volunteer and becoming captain of the Shooting Eight.

Thompson would probably not have wished to stay at Cambridge, and he certainly had no desire to become a typical don. Quite free from 'side', pedantry or affectation, possessing a fund of learning in his own chosen field, yet capable of enjoying light pursuits and amusements, loving life in the open air, he had his own predilections and prejudices, his own conception of the career that he would like to follow. In 1899, soon after taking the degree of B.A., he entered the British Museum as an Assistant in the Egyptian and Assyrian Department under E. A. Wallis Budge; he had there L. W. King, the outstanding British Assyriologist, and H. R. Hall, the historian of the Near East, as his colleagues, and was undoubtedly happy in companionship of work with them. Holidays at the week-end or on Sundays were spent tramping Surrey, Hertfordshire or Buckinghamshire, alone or with a chosen friend, notably Henry Robinson; and every conceivable subject was discussed by the friends on these tours. No day was too long for Thompson, and a walk of 25 or 30 miles never seemed to tire him, so strong was he. He also joined the Bath Club, where he regularly swam and made himself so expert a trapeze-diver as to give annual performances on special occasions; but when he left London and married a wife, he was compelled to resign his membership of the club as it had then become a luxury that he could not properly afford. He kept up, however, his membership of the Territorial Association,

joining the Cyclists' Battalion of the Inns of Court, and had been awarded the Territorial Medal for Efficiency before the outbreak of war in 1914.

During these years Thompson generally spent his vacations abroad. On these occasions he kept a full diary in which events, whether trivial or exciting, were entered, illustrated by rough sketches or snapshots. At the end of the diary he was wont to add lists of the kit taken on the journey, which would include such unusual articles as a Sandow exerciser and boxing-gloves, and of the stores bought, together with a detailed statement of the expenses incurred. Thus these diaries gave proof of a healthy enjoyment of the good things of life, while foreshadowing the work of a careful archaeologist in the field, who must perforce collect his equipment in advance and account for every penny spent; and they served ultimately as the basis of *A Pilgrim's Scrip*, in which Thompson told the story of many wanderings in parts of the Near East, then little known to Englishmen, in lively style.

The first of such holidays, however, in 1900, was spent not in the Near East but in Norway with friends, stalking deer on the Vidda above the Stavanger Fiord. The next holiday, in October 1902, which took him for the first time to the Semitic East, to whose study he was intending to devote his life, was a journey to Sinai. On this occasion he travelled with no European companion and only two Arabs hired with their camels in Egypt, and he thereby laid the foundation of his knowledge of colloquial Arabic dialects. He visited the now famous Sarâbîṭ-alḤâdim where the Egyptians mined turquoise, noted the inscriptions but did no work on them, and picked up a small number of beads and potsherds; thence he followed the Wâdi-alMukattab, again noting the numerous inscriptions with which the rocks are sprinkled, and returned by way of Fêrân and Sirbâl, where he lingered for a week's shooting, to Suez. He had thus covered 150 miles on camels and brought back a few miscellaneous objects which he gave to the Museum of Natural History. In September and October of 1903 he spent a similar holiday in the 'Barbary States', as he called them in his diary; there Tripoli was still an unspoiled Eastern town whose luxuriant vegetation by the blue Mediterranean Sea was in striking contrast to the arid sands of the Sinaitic Desert, and the district had hardly been visited by any Englishman beyond the eminent archaeologists Sir Arthur Evans and Sir John Myres. Again he started alone but joined forces with a young American named Weissberger who was visiting the country in search of reptiles and

whom he had met on board ship; and so these two travelled together on the best of terms, riding by day and bivouacking in the open air by night, southwards by Zanzûr to al'Ageilat, through hills in which they lost their way to Qasr 'Ifrîm, thence to Ghariyân where they visited the village of the Troglodytes and an extinct volcano, and so back by Râs-al'Aswad, Homs and Lebdah, famous for its Roman ruins, to Tripoli. Such holidays might yield few tangible results of archaeological or scientific value, but they taught Thompson to travel in often wild or lonely places with little regard to personal comfort, to observe the ways of nature and of man, to look out for unconsidered trifles of possible interest or value when compared with similar objects found elsewhere, to pick up the varying forms of native speech and to familiarize himself with Eastern ways of life. These, the formative years of his life, therefore, were wisely and profitably spent.

The experience thus gained of Eastern travel was soon to prove its use. In 1833–5 and again in 1844–7 Sir Henry Rawlinson had been at Bahistûn, now Bîsitûn, which lies about 65 miles from Hamadân on the road from Teheran to Baghdad, working on the famous trilingual inscription of Darius I (522–486 B.C.) and had made the copies of the text on which the decipherment of the Babylonian, Susian and Old-Persian, languages was based. These copies, however, made when the knowledge of the three languages was rudimentary, were no longer of the standard of accuracy required by the scholarship of the twentieth century, and subsequent study had shown the need of a revised text; at the same time Rawlinson's original squeezes had been worn and injured by frequent use. Moreover, the surface of the rock on which the inscriptions were engraved was reported to be suffering considerable damage from the percolation of water. Accordingly, in 1904, the Trustees of the British Museum resolved to make a final effort to obtain a definitive text while it was yet legible; and in 1904 they instructed Thompson to join King, of the same department as himself at the Museum, at Mosul, where he was already working, and to proceed thence with him to Bahistûn for this purpose. Thompson went out by boat by way of Smyrna, Mersina and Alexandretta, searching each place for stray antiquities as he passed it, and then by road from the last-named place to Dêr-azZôr on the Euphrates, where he was held up for a week waiting for an escort to accompany him on the next stage of his journey. He spent this enforced leisure paying local visits and translating Neo-Babylonian letters, of which he

had brought copies of the text with him in his baggage, having foreseen much delay of this sort. These were afterwards published in a volume entitled *Late Babylonian Letters* (1907), being one of the first publications of that type of Accadian literature. That these translations are not now up to standard is not Thompson's fault; they were pioneering work, and much water has flowed under the bridges since then. They showed, however, a promising if not a mature scholar and proved his determination to devote himself to studies of good learning in spite of every discomfort and inconvenience; but they also reveal a certain weakness in philology that was apt to appear even in his latest work. In due course a caravan was got together at Dêr-azZôr, an escort was provided, and the party started for the troubled Jabal Sinjâr, which they crossed with little molestation, due rather to misunderstanding than enmity on the part of the Yazîdis; and at some distance from Mosul Thompson met a watchman whom King had posted by the road to meet him and guide him to his journey's end. After a brief sojourn at Nineveh to close down the work there and to make final preparations for the journey onwards, King and Thompson proceeded with a caravan by a route between the Tigris and the Persian frontier, by way of Arbela or Irbîl, Altun Kupri, Kirkûk, Khâniqîn, and Kirmânshah to Bîsitûn. This, like many another of his journeys, fully described by Thompson in *A Pilgrim's Scrip*, was marked only by a brief delay due to local plague and the consequent quarantine, and some slight inconvenience caused by a rumour going the round of the bazaars that an English doctor had been poisoning his patients!

Arrived at their destination, the two scholars found themselves confronted by a task enough to appal the stoutest heart. The texts which they had come to recopy were carved on the sheer face of a rock overhanging a precipice. In order to approach its inscribed face they drove crowbars into crevices in the limestone on a natural ledge 200 feet above the text, fastened ropes to them and then, with some difficulty, shook them down the unequal face of the rock until their ends reached another and lower ledge (from which Rawlinson had worked) hewn in the surface below the inscriptions; they then had cradles made of wood from packing cases and mule-girths and slung these from the pendent ropes, having them raised and lowered by native workers stationed on the upper ledge so as to bring and maintain themselves in position opposite the lines of the text which they were copying. The task, arduous and often risky, of taking

squeezes or hand-copies of the text and photographing the sculptures, occupied sixteen days and was hastened, perhaps, by the desire to leave a district where cholera was raging. Its results were subsequently given to the world in *The Sculptures and Inscriptions of Darius the Great on the Rock of Behistûn in Persia* (1907), which contains an introduction and photographs of the rock and many of the sculptures, as well as the entire text in all three languages reproduced in cuneiform script and furnished with a transliteration into Roman characters and an English translation; the work is likely to be final so far as the actual text is concerned, and only small improvements in matters of detail can be expected in its interpretation. The two travellers returned by way of Sir-i-pul, where another Babylonian inscription engraved on the sheer face of a precipitous cliff and two or three others in the neighbourhood were copied; and so, delayed again by a brief quarantine, they made their way back to Mosul. In June King returned to England, but Thompson remained there for some months, finishing off the work that had been begun on the mound of Quyunjuq; and in the course of this operation, the first piece of work that he had undertaken alone, he succeeded in discovering the temple of Nabû, the Biblical Nebo, on which he was to resume work many years afterwards.

In February 1905 Thompson left Mosul to return home, taking a different route from that by which he had come out to it in order to increase his knowledge of the East. He made a long circuit by way of Qal'at Sharghât, where he went over the German excavations with Andrae, passed through the territory of the Shammâr Arabs without mishap, and proceeded by Takrît and Samârrah to Baghdad, where he stayed long enough to rest the horses and shake off a mild attack of fever. He then rode through 'Aqarqûf to 'Anâh, where he picked up a palaeolithic instrument on the river-bank and had a dispute with a tax-collector who tried to levy a tax on his horses; he successfully invoked the aid of the local *qaimmaqâm* to ensure exemption on the ground that he was a European, only to learn on reaching Damascus that European exemption had been withdrawn! He was a second time delayed at Dêr-azZôr by the need of finding an escort but, wiser than on the first occasion, he got what he wanted in two days by a judicious mixture of firmness and bribery. Thus protected, he hastened on through severe sandstorms across the undulating desert plain, picking up ancient flints as he went, past Tadmûr and Qariyatên into Damascus,

which he reached after a journey of sixteen and a half days on horseback. Thence he took train to Beirut, where he caught the boat for England.

Thompson for some time enjoyed his connexion with the British Museum; yet things irked him. During most of his time there he was engaged in routine duties, mainly cataloguing and transcribing cuneiform texts. He disliked, however, being tied to London, as he wanted to travel and explore places and countries on a scale not compatible with duties in Bloomsbury. He also, as he said, liked 'to see his own label on his own pot of jam', and disliked working in comparative anonymity on official publications. Life at the Museum was perhaps not suited to his temperament, and he could not easily endure the necessary restrictions of official life. Here perhaps he was unreasonable, but this attitude was typical of him, not because he was in the least degree addicted to bragging, but that he was too independent to fit into other people's moulds, although there was nothing eccentric about him. Inevitably therefore he decided that he must seek a career elsewhere, in a way which would enable him to follow his own bent and give him liberty to come and go as he liked, and in December 1905 he resigned his position and left the Museum.

Thompson, with the help of Mr. J. W. Crowfoot, now entered the service of the Sudanese Government and proceeded at once to Khartum, whence he was sent to join an English engineer then engaged on surveying what he called 'the awful black mountains of the Hadendowa country'. They were the only Englishmen in an unmapped country where the heat was so great that work was possible only in the early morning and the late evening, and where the spaces were so vast that on one occasion his companion, a trained surveyor, was lost for several days on end, and he himself missed his way for the most part of a day while seeking for him. The survey took barely six months, and in the summer of 1906 Thompson was back in England looking for another job.

Finding nothing suitable in England, Thompson in 1907 accepted the post of Assistant Professor of Semitic Languages in the University of Chicago, which he held for two years. He certainly enjoyed these years, difficult though they were. For example, as a sportsman he resented what he declared to be an unnecessary act on the part of the umpires in a swimming match when they interfered, on the ground that the water was dangerously cold, with his chance of winning a three miles' race when he was left the last competitor who had not yet entered the water;

his protest was heard, and he won both point and race, for which he received a medal. Again, he kept a small yacht in the harbour on Lake Michigan flying the British flag in season and out of season, and echoes of his bluff Englishry were still heard in the American university nearly twenty years afterwards. His comments, too, on the wealth of endowment which he found there and his frank and free criticism were by no means always acceptable to his colleagues; he was by nature outspoken, and any man who failed to come up to his standards was 'no man' to him. Finally, the University was by origin a school of divinity endowed by and largely supported on Baptist funds, whereas Thompson was an agnostic on religious questions; consequently, a somewhat uneasy partnership came in 1909 to an early, if not unexpected, end.

During these strenuous years of public service and travel, both unofficial and official, Thompson had found time to publish a number of Assyriological works which were winning him an assured place in the learned world. All these early works were the fruit of the opportunities which the British Museum, with its unrivalled treasures, offered him and which he eagerly grasped. The long series of *Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum* had been inaugurated by the Trustees in 1896, and ten volumes had already been published by King and Pinches when Thompson brought out his first volume (No. XI) in 1900; and he followed this up with seven volumes (Nos. XII, XIV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX) undertaken alone, and two others (Nos. XXII and XXIII), prepared in collaboration with King, between that date and 1906. Ten volumes of such texts in six years was a very considerable achievement; for each contained fifty plates in which the texts were photographically reproduced from hand-drawn copies, a method which allowed the niceties of the various scripts current at different times and places to be adequately represented but which made the work of preparation necessarily slow. The texts published by Thompson dealt with a wide range of subjects: five were devoted to lexicography, which enabled great advances to be made in philology, two to demonology, one to omens and one to magical practices, and one to letters of the late Babylonian and Persian periods. The whole series, which has now reached forty-one volumes, is indispensable to the student of Assyriology, and of these the majority are from the hands of King and Thompson, fifteen from the former and eight from the latter, with two jointly edited. The view of posterity will probably be that these and other texts which Thompson published in facsimile were his best work; and it is indeed surprising how

so muscular and almost clumsy a man could have made copies of minute cuneiform signs which, when reproduced by photography, gave the appearance of having been printed, so neat and clear was every line that he drew; hardly a tremor can be detected in any stroke or sign even under a powerful glass. Further, so far as his copies have been checked by other scholars, the degree of accuracy has been found surprising for the first copies of often extremely difficult texts; and, as such publications of the original texts are not subject to fluctuations of interpretation in so far as the accuracy of the copy is not concerned, it may be safely asserted that Thompson *exegit monumentum aere perennius* in them.

Thompson, however, was not content to be a mere copyist of cuneiform tablets, he sought also to interpret what he copied. Accordingly he began by bringing out a small monograph *On Traces of an Indefinite Article in Assyrian* (1902), in which he tried to show that the form of the noun with a termination corresponded to the Aramaic 'emphatic state', while its absence resulted in a form identical with the 'absolute state'; his explanation, however, was not generally accepted as successful, to a certain extent perhaps because he had not understood the full implications of these forms, but chiefly because he relied for his evidence principally on late texts or late copies of early texts, as he had of necessity to do at a time when few early texts with correct syntax had been published. The study of Accadian syntax can be profitably pursued only when it is begun with or is based on Old-Babylonian texts, especially on the Code of Ḫammurabi, which however was then only just on the point of being made available. Meanwhile, he had already started on another line of work, in which he was destined to achieve a considerable measure of success, by issuing the two volumes of *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon* (1900), another two volumes of *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* (1903–4), and one volume of *Late Babylonian Letters* (1906). The first of these works consists of one volume of fresh texts, printed unfortunately in a cuneiform fount and not photographically from hand-drawn copies, so that the vagaries of the scribes' handwritings are obscured, and another of transliterations and translations; the other two works contain transliterations and translations of texts which he had already published for the British Museum, with select glossaries of rare and difficult words. The transliterations in these works were for the most part accurate according to the standards of those days, but the translations showed defects inseparable from pioneering work. Thompson

did not and could not know what was subsequently discovered, for example, of rules of syntax or meanings of words, but what he did was of outstanding importance for collecting and drawing attention to groups of texts dealing with a number of abstruse and then hardly known subjects in various single publications; and their very mass allowed much worthless nonsense that had been written on these subjects to be disproved and discarded and enabled phenomena found in them to be subjected to principles of interpretation on which all subsequent studies have rested. The least satisfactory part of this work was the Sumerian portion, of which the Babylonian text was merely an interlinear translation, in the *Devils and Evil Spirits*; for the knowledge of the Sumerian language was then very imperfect, no trustworthy grammars or dictionaries existed, and Thompson had never apparently given himself to any close or serious study of the language. While, therefore, his cuneiform texts have been the basis of much subsequent study of this language and will certainly stand the test of time, his interpretation of them is apt to go astray and will require to be redone at some future date. Finally, a by-product of this period that calls for mention was his *Semitic Magic: its Origin and Development* (1908). This contained a large amount of miscellaneous information collected from Babylonian sources and illustrated by matter drawn rather at haphazard from the rest of the Semitic world, as well as from other races. Thompson had, apparently, at this time difficulties with the authorities at the British Museum, since he felt himself justified in complaining in his preface that 'my two applications for permission to copy unpublished tablets of this nature [i.e. illustrating the practice of taboo] were refused', so that the material for his study of a most interesting branch of primitive religion was incomplete, and his work was to that extent somewhat ill balanced. Its author, too, was not very deeply read in comparative religion and was somewhat out of sympathy generally with the subject. However that might be, he gathered together much useful information otherwise obtained only with difficulty, and the book ought not, for that reason alone, to be allowed to pass entirely into oblivion.

In the late summer of 1909 Thompson was again wandering in the Near East, having decided to spend his vacation filling in the blank spaces between Angora, now Ankara, and Eregli in Kiepert's map of Asia Minor, and looking for the relics of the ancient Hittite civilization. After taking train from Constantinople to Ankara, he there formed a caravan and rode through

a number of Turkish and Turcoman villages, for the most part living and sleeping under the open skies, although the nights were often cold while the days had been hot. He went by way of Denek Ma'den, where curiosity took him down the lead-mines, to Boghazköi, the capital city of the Hittite empire, where Winckler had found large numbers of clay-tablets inscribed with cuneiform texts in the Hittite language, since deciphered; and there he explored the Hittite palaces and temples and climbed up the hillsides to look for and examine the sculptured rocks. The caravan was then broken up, and Thompson continued by Yuzgat and Boghazlian, where he found a Roman milestone of A.D. 249–51 in the cemetery and sent a copy of its text to Sir William Ramsay, and so over the shoulder of Ismail Dagh to Caesarea, the modern Kaisariyeh, where he spent five days with Dr. and Mrs. Dodd at the American Hospital nearby at Talas. On 28 September he turned his steps homeward and struggled, feverish but still plotting sites on the map, by Feraklin, where he found some carved Hittite rocks, and the classical Tyana back to Eregli, whence he took train for Constantinople and so returned to England. Thus he was preparing himself for his study of the Hittite hieroglyphs, while at the same time, as in the course of all these journeys, widening his outlook on the history of the Near (or, as it is now miscalled, Middle) East, and observing keenly whatever might throw light on the people's forefathers from the customs and habits of the living inhabitants of those parts; he picked up also a wide variety of information about Eastern plants, which subsequently came in useful for his studies in Assyrian botany, and was constantly collecting evidence which he afterwards used in his publications on Assyrian geology, chemistry and medicine. He fully understood that to interpret ancient remains the proper study of mankind is man, and this realization gave a freshness of outlook and a wide scope well beyond the range of the legendary dry-as-dust antiquary to all his archaeological work.

In February 1911 Thompson left England to undertake excavation at Carchemish with Dr. D. G. Hogarth, proceeding alone to Aleppo, there to await the coming of his chief; and while staying in this town he saw the Turkish governor welcoming back eight hundred weather-beaten Turkish troops who had returned from a campaign against the Druses in the Haurân. Towards the end of April Hogarth returned to England and Thompson was left in charge of the excavation, assisted by Woolley and Lawrence, who was then at the threshold of his

brilliant but all too brief career. The season's campaign was eminently successful and produced a rich harvest of sculptures and bas-reliefs, many of them furnished with long Hittite hieroglyphic inscriptions, and both Thompson and Lawrence spent much time in taking rubbings of these hieroglyphs and in searching the neighbouring site of Tall 'Aḥmar, the ancient Til Barsip, on the opposite bank of the Euphrates for other inscriptions known to be there and in copying those that they found. It was not till twenty years after this work that Thompson found two other Hittite hieroglyphic texts, one on limestone and the other on a unique clay-tablet from Nineveh. He also made a survey of Carchemish which was published by Hogarth in his report on the excavations of that historic site, but little else is recorded of any other part that he played in its excavation, which he left for a characteristic reason. He had recently become engaged to Barbara Brodrick, daughter of Sir Richard Atkinson Robinson of Whitby in Yorkshire, and was anxious to marry her and have her with him at Carchemish. Hogarth, however, as director of the excavation on behalf of the Trustees of the British Museum, refused permission on the ground that the country was not safe for an English lady who might often be left alone in the camp. Thompson therefore, with his usual independence, resigned his job and came home to be married.

On reaching England Thompson took a house near Hindhead, where he and his wife lived for three years while he worked at the decipherment of the Hittite hieroglyphs with a success neither more nor less than that attained by other workers in the same field at that early date. Hindhead, however, was soon found too far from the specialist kind of library required by Thompson for his Oriental researches, and husband and wife debated the rival claims of Oxford and Cambridge. The choice was nicely balanced on personal and other grounds. Both places offered the necessary facilities for Thompson's research. Further, he was related to Professor N. V. Sidgwick, F.R.S., the eminent chemist, who was a Fellow of Lincoln College, and to Lady Warren, the wife of the President of Magdalen College, Oxford; for she was the sister of Sir Benjamin Brodie, Bt., and they were the children of the second baronet and his wife Philothea Margaret Thompson, who was the sister of Thompson's father. At the same time his surviving brother had married the sister of Mr. J. F. Cameron, Fellow, and afterwards Master, of Caius College, and Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University. Thompson, too, was an old member of Cambridge University, while his wife's brother,

afterwards killed in the war, was then an undergraduate at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. This young man claimed to be able to find them a suitable house near Oxford; both were averse to a low-lying place like Cambridge and, hearing through him of a suitable house on Boars' Hill, just outside Oxford, they immediately took it. This district was not the fashionable suburb that it afterwards became and was admirably suited to Thompson's needs. Here, therefore, he settled himself down to an extremely happy domestic life; and here all his family were born, a daughter Yolande and two sons, Reginald Perronet and John De Morgan. His home, too, lay near enough to the Thames to enable him to indulge his favourite recreations of boating and bathing without undue expense of time or money, and many friends still remain to tell of days, idle or strenuous, spent on the river in the neighbourhood of Abingdon.

In the winter of 1913–14 Thompson for the first time took entire charge of a small archaeological expedition, when he went on behalf of the Byzantine Fund, accompanied by F. A. Richards as architect, to excavate a Coptic site in the Wâdi Sargah, lying about fifteen miles to the south of 'Asyûṭ in Egypt. The place was in fact of little importance but was thought to be just worth scientific investigation, and Thompson made good use of the chance thus offered to him. The site was in a cleft of the hills formed by an ancient watercourse, and the work fell into two parts, the excavation of the ruins of the ancient town and the exploration of some caves in the hillside. These caves, which had been in human occupation in pre-Christian times, yielded an Egyptian relief, a fresco in colour of the Last Supper which though in a fair state of preservation was too fragile to be moved and of which a coloured tracing was made, and many Coptic potsherds; and a neighbouring villa produced a charming little fresco of the Three Holy Children in the Fiery Furnace, which was brought home, and some other frescoes which were left in position. A late Egyptian cemetery, too, was partly excavated, and two Coptic cemeteries were examined. The excavation of the main site revealed remains of a densely populated quarter, with houses built on terraces with narrow public stairways running up the hill between them; many of the houses had each a *mastabah* at the back and strange little vaulted cells large enough to take a man lying at full length. Much crude pottery decorated with geometric patterns or else animal or human heads, miscellaneous objects of use or ornament, inscribed vellum, some papyri, and very many inscribed ostraca, were also

found, evidence of occupation by a poor but industrious population.

Thompson, from being a leading spirit in the Cadet Corps at school and a keen Volunteer at the University, had in due course become a Territorial officer. Naturally, therefore, on the outbreak of the War in the autumn of 1914, he immediately applied for and obtained a commission as an officer on Special Service, being gazetted to Military Intelligence for service in the East. He was posted to the Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' under the command of General (afterwards Field-Marshal) Sir Arthur Barrett and reached India late in the year. After a month there he was attached to the General Staff with the rank of Captain and accompanied one of the first contingents of troops proceeding to 'Irâq, which he reached in time to be present at the battle of Shu'aibah in April 1915. He remained for four continuous years in that country, where the campaign, from a beginning of resistance that was not too formidable became, in the course of those years, one marked by the most bitter fighting, combined with the most rigorous climatic and other hardships; but his powers of endurance and his knowledge of the people, their country, customs and languages, both Arabic and Turkish, made him an invaluable member of the Staff. He was with the advance to Kut and beyond, narrowly escaped capture in the siege of that place, being with one of the last parties to leave it, was with the retreat in November 1915 past Ctesiphon to the base, and then returned with General Maude's force in 1917 to enter Baghdad.

As a normal routine Thompson spent many hours every day unostentatiously interrogating all sorts and conditions of men, sedentary shopkeepers in the bazaars and nomad Arabs from the open country and, whenever the chance came, enemy prisoners in the cages. He was also employed, about the time when the capture of Baghdad became imminent, on special work of very high importance in which his peculiar knowledge was invaluable; this work, which is still an unrevealed secret of the war, continued until he was relieved of military duties for other tasks. During the whole campaign he and his devoted batman were undefeated by any mishaps or incongruities; thus, although many officers lost kit or equipment on the stricken field of Ctesiphon, none probably but Thompson emerged less only one complete suit of civilian evening dress-clothes! He threw all his boundless energy into every task that came his way, scarcely flagging when the temperature in his office in Baghdad reached

nearly 123° in the shade in July 1917 and withal maintaining his keen sense of humour through the long trying days of a Mesopotamian summer. No small strength of character and power of endurance are implied in such conduct, and his unfailing services were recognized by his being four times mentioned in dispatches. He saw, however, little if any actual fighting, which rarely falls to the lot of an officer of Intelligence, but his record shows how much useful and valued work he did while on active service. Meanwhile he kept himself fit by various physical exercises, chiefly practising cut and thrust with a sabre on the roof of the mess, and these were the subject of much good-humoured chaff amongst his fellow-officers. In March 1918 he was released from military duties and left G.H.Q. to undertake political duties in connexion with the vast country that had by then come under British control and administration.

The reason for this change of occupation was that the Trustees of the British Museum had become anxious about the conservation of the antiquities of 'Irâq and had made representations to the military authorities on this subject. Consequently Thompson, whose archaeological work was a matter of common knowledge, was attached to the Political Service and detailed to undertake a general supervision of antiquities, with power to conduct excavation, for which he was allowed to employ Turkish prisoners of war. In accordance with his instructions, he surveyed a large district to the south-east of Nâṣirîyah; he then cut some exploratory trenches at the ancient Ur, now Tall-al Muqaiyar, but abandoned this work as beyond his resources and turned his attention to the site of the ancient Eridu, now 'Abû Shahrên, which he decided to submit to detailed examination, although he had been warned against it on the score of danger from nomad Arabs, in a district lying across an old tribal raiding ground and not yet wholly pacified, and of the difficulty of getting water, where no fresh water was, and other supplies. It was a truly lonely site, and Thompson wrote that 'as far as eye can see there is naught but awful solitude'. He was not, however, a man to be daunted by such difficulties, and he made some interesting archaeological discoveries on the site which was traditionally known to the Babylonians as one of the oldest Sumerian cities, built when the day of creation dawned and the first place on to which 'the rule of kings came down from heaven'. He had, however, only four weeks before him and was thus restricted to digging a number of trial pits and trenches. The main interest of this excavation lay in the abundant evidence of

the occupation of the site in prehistoric times, as shown by the numerous fragments of the painted pottery known as the ware of al'Ubaid; and many specimens of sickles of clay, of scrapers of chert flint and obsidian, and of hoes of stone, represented this same period. Thompson showed great acumen and prescience in recognizing the affinity of this pottery with the Iranian fabrics of Susa and in suggesting that its origins might be sought eastwards of Mesopotamia. The illustrated records of his finds further prove that remains also of the periods of Uruk and Jamdat Naṣr exist there. Thus numerous painted cornets and clay-pegs lying amongst the lumps of limestone round the *ziggurrat* or stage-tower were witnesses to substantial relics of the former period, and amongst other objects the petal of a rosette in shale was certainly a piece of the decorated façade of some important building of the latter or of the early dynastic epoch *c.* 3000 B.C. He was able also to lay bare a part of the face of the ancient stage-tower where Taylor, the British Consul, had made soundings nearly three-quarters of a century before him. In the course of this operation he found stamped bricks bearing the names of Ur-Nammu (*c.* 2135 B.C.) and his grandson Bur-Sin or Amar-Sin (*c.* 2075 B.C.), kings of Ur who had refaced the tower, and also of Nûr-Immer or Nûr-Adad (*c.* 1890 B.C.), king of Larsa, thereby proving that building continued on the site for over a century after the downfall of the third dynasty of Ur (*c.* 2025 B.C.). His careful examination of each stage also revealed pottery of the Sargonid period and produced evidence that there was little or no occupation of the mound between the early epoch of Larsa and the late or New Babylonian period (626–538 B.C.).

Thompson's work at Eridu suggests that objects of great value and fine quality still lie buried within the mound. Fragments of sheet-gold and nails of copper with golden heads and a beautiful piece of a vase of aragonite carved with a figure of a woman in relief, in the best Sumerian style, were turned up amongst the rubbish. He has thus proved that the site is especially suitable for excavators looking for remains not later in date than the third millennium B.C., since it is not heavily encumbered with buildings of any subsequent age, although there must be evidence of the last Assyrian and Babylonian dynasties on some part of the site. His soundings, therefore, which characteristically have produced the maximum of result for the minimum of expense, may perhaps induce the Archaeological Department in Baghdad to go to work on the site.

Incidentally, too, he proved that the statement in an early chronicle that Eridu lay 'on the neck of the deep water' meant not on the shores of the sea (i.e. the Persian Gulf) but on the edge of a lagoon, since only shells of mussels living in fresh water were found there. The report, like Thompson's other reports, contained detailed information regarding implements of bone and stone and the pottery, illustrated now by photographs and now by neat black and white drawings, and also copies of the text of the few tablets recovered from the ruins. Such work, as a mere πάρεργον of military service, would have been remarkable if it had not been carried out by a European scholar exhausted after over four years of continuous duty and excessive strain in the worst climate of the Middle East; it was merely typical of Thompson's energy and courage.

Two of Thompson's books were published during the War. The first, which had been finished before his departure from England in 1914, was *A Pilgrim's Scrip* (1915) which, after an opening chapter of advice addressed to intending archaeologists, contains descriptions, illustrated with snapshots, of his travels in the East whether for pleasure or on business. It is packed with the results of a keen observation of the ways of man and beast, and with lively accounts of antiquities seen or acquired by the way, written in a readable but somewhat mannered style, characterized by an Elizabethan vocabulary and the syntax of Doughty, whose *Arabia Deserta* Thompson had read and re-read. The second of these works was *A Small Handbook to the History and Antiquities of Mesopotamia* (1918), of which the preface was signed at 'Eridu (Abu Shahrain)' but which was printed at Baghdad in the usual shoddy style of Oriental publications. This contained a useful summary of Mesopotamian history from *c.* 4000 B.C. to the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. and a chronological list of the principal events after that date till the end of the Sassanian epoch in A.D. 652, with a brief account of the chief sites excavated up to the War. It was much appreciated by the troops, for whom it was intended, and was something of a best seller.

In the same year Thompson returned to England after four years of arduous service broken only by one month's leave in India, and early in 1919 he was demobilized.

Thompson, with a young wife and growing family, on whose upbringing he expended the utmost care and pains, now lived quietly on Boars' Hill, devoting himself to Assyriological study. By way of recreation he tried his hand at the writing of novels

and under the pseudonym of 'John Guisborough' published two stories of life in the East, the one *A Song of Araby* (1921), which went into two editions, and the other *A Mirage of Sheba* (1923). These are healthy robust tales in an Arabian setting, the first about an enemy agent and the second about a wandering archaeologist. The plots are slight, but many of the descriptive passages are vivid and perhaps in part reflect the author's own experiences; the style is the author's own, vigorous but archaistic, being modelled partly on the Elizabethan and partly on Doughty, of whom Thompson was a great admirer. During these years Thompson also found time for serious work, notably three chapters in the *Cambridge Ancient History*; these were those on 'Isin Larsa and Babylon' in the first, on 'Assyria' in the second, and on 'The New Babylonian Empire' in the third volume of that great work (1923–5). Here there was little or no scope for original treatment, but these three chapters give a lucid and generally trustworthy account of the events described and possibly the liveliest and most human account of Accadian civilization yet written by an English scholar.

Any need to look out for paid work was now fortunately removed by the wise action of Merton College, which in 1923 elected Thompson into a stipendiary Fellowship. The recognition thus accorded to his work gave him the greatest pleasure, but whether, as a late-comer into the University, he was able to enter whole-heartedly into the subtle spirit of Oxford might be doubted. A Fellow elected not for tutorial or administrative duties but for research might have little contact with the undergraduate members of his College, but Thompson was punctilious in fulfilling all such duties in College as fell to him, and he took his turn as Sub-Warden in 1933–5; but election to a Fellowship, and that in a University of which he was not originally an *alumnus*, came to him too late in life to allow him ever to learn his way about College or University in the fullest sense. He was, however, extremely good-natured and was always ready to do any job for the College for which others were perhaps not enthusiastic; but at its meetings he practised a rare economy of words, unlike some of his colleagues, speaking seldom except when the discussion seemed to require a dose of sturdy common sense. He enjoyed, however, the social life of the Common Room and, whatever the weather might be, he would regularly descend on a cycle from the height of Boars' Hill to dine at High Table, ready on the least provocation to quote Dickens or with the greatest good humour to endure the chaff

of his colleagues about his love of early rising and physical exercises, his latest archaeological exploits, or his hatred of motor-cars and motor-boats.

The settled life which Thompson now enjoyed enabled him to turn his attention fully to the natural science of the Babylonians and Assyrians, on which he had been collecting information more or less at haphazard for many years. He was perhaps impelled to this branch of Assyriology by the subconscious influence of heredity, and throughout his life he had evinced a deep interest not only in flints and potsherds but also in flowers and beasts as subjects ancillary to archaeology, and his powers of observation were as much those of a scientist or naturalist as of an antiquary. It is therefore no matter of surprise that he made noteworthy contributions to an almost totally neglected field of Assyriological research. He brought out three books in quick succession on this subject, his *Assyrian Medical Texts in the British Museum* (1923), then the *Assyrian Herbal* (1924), and lastly *On the Chemistry of the Ancient Assyrians* (1925). Of these books the first is a collection of cuneiform texts published in facsimile in the style of the well-known *Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum*; it contained copies of 660 medical tablets or of fragments of such tablets which he had been bringing together in the British Museum since 1906, and on which he had read a preliminary paper before the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1913. All these texts come from Ashurbanipal's library at Quyunjuq, now in the British Museum, but are to a considerable extent copies of older tablets, and scarcely one is undamaged; they range from large tablets of forty or fifty lines to the merest fragments preserving scarcely half a dozen signs, but all alike are copied with Thompson's meticulous care and faultless script. The labour of sorting and arranging all these texts and of identifying and joining the scattered fragments to others to which they belong must have been immense, but it has put the study of Assyrian medicine on a secure footing. The interpretation of these texts, too, was not overlooked but was carried forward in a number of separate articles in which the editor probably extracted all that can be got out of them, thereby greatly advancing the understanding of these and similar texts in other collections. The other two of these works contained little fresh matter but represented a reworking of previously published texts containing lexicographical information of importance for the study of medicine and a considerable number of chemical recipes, such as those on glass-making, some

of which seemed to be written in a form of code or cypher by way of keeping their contents a mystery. Here Thompson was at his best as an interpreter; the niceties of syntax hardly came into question, and his wide knowledge of natural history not only suggested proper lines of investigation but also enabled him to avoid the mistakes of the unscientific scholar, and his independence helped him to see that the narrow rules of philology governing the transmission of sounds might not necessarily be applicable to words of rare or local use and often exotic origin, possibly corrupted, too, in the mouths of traders who carried them across many different countries. He was thus enabled to refer several well-known European words like 'cherry' and 'ochre' to unsuspected Oriental sources. Naturally, all his identifications were not accepted, but his massive collection of relevant facts has removed both the botany and the chemistry of the Assyrians from the realm of guesswork and has enabled numerous texts which had hitherto defied interpretation to be satisfactorily explained. Both books were unfortunately, owing to the exigencies of the times, reproduced from Thompson's manuscript, so that the text is not always as clear as the reader might wish. The *Assyrian Chemistry* has, however, been enlarged into *A Dictionary of Assyrian Chemistry and Geology* (1936), printed and published by the Clarendon Press with their usual care and skill, so that scholars now have an indispensable handbook of over 260 pages, bringing all the available knowledge on this subject up to date; and a revised manuscript of the 'Herbal', left almost complete by Thompson at his death, waits only on the completion of its editing by Mr. C. J. Gadd and the convenience of the printers.

In 1927 Thompson submitted proposals to the Trustees of the British Museum for continuing the excavations begun more than twenty years ago on the temple of Nabû at Nineveh, offering to pay his own expenses if they would augment these resources and give him control of the expedition. This scheme was approved by the Trustees, who made a grant of £300 towards the cost, while other contributions were received from Merton College and the Percy Sladen Memorial Fund. Thompson was on this occasion accompanied only by R. W. Hutchinson; and he noted in his memoirs that on this, his second venture at Quyunjuq, following a route which had taken him six days on horse-back on the previous occasion, he travelled from Baghdad to Mosul in a little over twelve hours. Thereafter he was able to dig the site for another three seasons, largely owing to his economical

methods of work and to the munificence of Sir Charles Hyde, to whose newspaper, the *Birmingham Post*, he sent several general accounts of his work.

In estimating the value of Thompson's work at Nineveh it must be remembered that the prizes had already been extracted from the mound by a long line of distinguished predecessors, including Layard, Ross, Hormuzd Rassam and George Smith, over a period of fifty years, and spectacular results were now scarce and unlikely. Layard alone, who dug out the great palace of Sennacherib, could claim to have laid bare seventy-one halls, chambers and passages, between 1845 and 1847, and nearly two miles of sculptured bas-reliefs, in addition to many thousands of tablets, which constituted the nucleus of the famous library of Ashurbanipal at Quyunjuq. Between 1851 and 1854 Rassam, too, had found many more thousands of tablets in the palace of Ashurbanipal at the opposite end of the mound to Sennacherib's palace, and George Smith, in the course of three more expeditions between 1873 and 1876, had met with outstanding success so far as the discovery of tablets was concerned, including additional texts of portions of the legend of the Deluge which had been the primary object of his quest. After another spell of work by Rassam between 1878 and 1882 Wallis Budge, who between 1888 and 1891 had been sent out by the Trustees of the British Museum, wisely decided to confine himself to clearing out old trenches, and had the sagacity to report that there was still work on the mound not for months but for years.

When Thompson joined King in 1904, the latter had dug a series of fifty-two shafts at intervals of fifty to eighty feet to an average depth of forty feet in the broad patches beside and between the two palaces. This work turned out to be so much fruitless labour but convinced Thompson that he had been provided with valuable negative evidence 'proving that it is the backbone of the mound and its neighbourhood which will keep a generation of students busy'. Whether in fact the remaining portions of the mound are as bare as Thompson thought they were, will not be confirmed until another generation of excavators goes to work on it. The policy which Thompson consistently pursued, of concentrating on the spine of Quyunjuq, involved digging over what must once have been the richest part of the mound, in levels that had been ruthlessly plundered by Medes, Parthians, Sassanians, and generations of others in search of loot. Tunnelling was no longer practicable, because working in darkness when there are no bas-reliefs to guide the pick is an im-

possible method of excavating. Moreover, Thompson was further handicapped by having to fill in his trenches as soon as he had dug them out, and he therefore never obtained a clear view over a wide area. This handicap, combined with centuries of ruthless destruction, made it impossible to discover continuous ground-plans or to make conjectural restorations of buildings in outline; but with the limited funds at his disposal this method proved both practical and profitable, and it is certain that no other excavator could have spent less and found more over the same ground. Any other system of work in that area would have involved the spending of thousands of pounds with a negligible amount of additional information to show for the money, and posterity owes him a debt for the patience with which year after year he plodded along, gradually consolidating our knowledge of the ancient city. He harvested a rich crop of inscriptions, many of them intact, and was able, from the great quantity of scattered fragments of tablets, to make scores of 'joins' with other portions of cuneiform texts which had been found in earlier expeditions. He was able, too, from the hundreds of small objects which he discovered season after season, to throw sidelights on the history of many different periods, finally reconstructing the main stages of occupation at Nineveh from the first settlement on virgin soil till the abandonment of the site in the fourteenth century A.D. He was a most conscientious recorder of every variety of object discovered in the excavations, and his accounts of each season's digging are source-books which no student of Mesopotamian archaeology can afford to neglect. The need for economy often prevented him from producing his illustrations in an attractive form, but this defect was outweighed by the rapidity with which he published his results after each season's work, and he left nothing of importance unrecorded. He enlisted the help of technical experts on a wide variety of materials including bones, beads, glass, and coins. He noted the discovery of a brooch of bronze belonging to a Roman soldier exactly matching three other specimens found so far afield as Silchester, York, and the Roman Wall in Britain. Further, in the medieval levels, Hutchinson and Hamilton noted Mesopotamian imitations of Chinese ceramic, an echo of the ebb and flow of trade between the farthest corner of Western Asia and the Chinese end of the silk-route. The mobility of man was also suggested by the quality of fabrics at a far earlier period, in the prehistoric epoch.

Before Thompson's work only two palaces had been located. In the course of four seasons he was to discover the sites of many

different historical buildings and several inscribed prisms giving important information concerning Assyrian kings. Yet it is a curious fact that, when one comes to put together the evidence for the early Assyrian occupation of Quyunjuq, there are so many blank intervals in its history. There is a long gap between the building of the Sargonid temple called E-mashmash and the eighteenth century B.C.; and there is an almost equally empty period between the reigns of Shamshi-Adad I, a contemporary of Ḫammu-rabi king of Babylon (*c.* 1792–1750 B.C., a reduction of nearly three centuries on the old chronology necessitated by recent research which is of cardinal importance for Babylonian archaeology) and of Ashur-uballiṭ I (*c.* 1376–1336 B.C.), to which only the pieces of the white painted ware from Nuzi found by Thompson and Tushratta's sending of Ishtar to Nineveh may be assigned. These historical gaps cannot be explained entirely by the comparatively restricted area of excavation, even though work on the flats is quite likely eventually to produce some of the missing evidence. In all probability, however, these gaps reflected the varying fortunes of Nineveh, marking periods in which the sites of the great palace and temple were practically abandoned, while the unobtrusive farmer continued his work in some neglected spot untouched by the rod of Empire.

In the season of 1927–8 Thompson, assisted by Hutchinson, excavated the temple of Nabû of the eighth to seventh centuries B.C. and also uncovered some chambers of the palace of Ashur-nāṣir-apli (882–839 B.C.) and part of a house built by Sennacherib; they proved that the site, having been finally razed in 612 B.C., remained unoccupied till after the Seleucid period and they also uncovered traces of a succession of buildings from that period down to the fourteenth century A.D. They recovered many cuneiform tablets ranging from Ashur-uballiṭ I (1376–1336 B.C.) to Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.) and several historical prisms or parts of prisms of Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.), Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal (668–626 B.C.), numerous other objects of archaeological interest, and much pottery dated from *c.* 3500 B.C. onwards. Thompson also made a brilliant topographical discovery by identifying the fine stretch of stone-walling, which lies across the river Khusr in the 'Ajilah gorge two miles to the north of Quyunjuq, on an Assyrian dam, one of the main reservoirs built by Sennacherib; this was described by the king in inscriptions as the *agammu*-pool whereby, in the king's own words, 'he made everything luxuriant, the vine, almond, cypress, and mulberry thriving, while the storks nested in

the thickets and the wild swine increased'. The correctness of Thompson's conjecture was confirmed some years afterwards by Seton Lloyd and Jacobsen's discovery of Sennacherib's aqueduct at Jarwân; here the king had recorded his name and the style of masonry was partly similar to that of the dam at Nineveh. Thompson also made another survey of the mound in an attempt to locate the ancient city-gates built by Sennacherib, of which eighteen were recorded on a prism discovered in the flats. His knowledge of the whole locality also enabled him to criticize the proposed solution of the problem respecting the course of the river Tebiltu given in Olmstead's map, which unwittingly implied that the water at one point flowed uphill!

In the second season, that of 1929–30, Thompson and Hutchinson worked on the precincts of a small palace of Ashur-nāṣir-apli which had been rebuilt and completed by Adad-nirāri (809–782 B.C.). They failed apparently to find the actual palace but uncovered other buildings, notably one of burnt brick 'decorated with beautiful paintings, rosettes, patterns, figures and scenes of the king himself', and they found 'special bricks with more delicate pictures, the king in a castellated crown, himself in his chariot, tribute-bearers, horses being driven as tribute from the mountains, and a besieged fortress', where the colours most commonly used were white, yellow, green, black, rarely brown, and very rarely red. This site further yielded a most interesting collection of some 10,000 early dynastic beads, as well as a number of amulets now paralleled from deposits in the square temple at Tall 'Asmar, many cuneiform tablets of the Assyrian period, most of them unfortunately broken, and much pottery reaching down into the Parthian and Christian eras.

In the following season, that of 1930–31, Thompson had R. W. Hamilton, now Director of Antiquities in Palestine, as assistant, and they uncovered the platform of mud-brick supporting the temple of Ishtar, which they found to have been built and rebuilt by eight different kings, from Manishtusu king of Agade (*c.* 2400 B.C.) to the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, and to have been finally destroyed in 612 B.C. Amongst the architectural remains was a series of massive vaulted graves of brick with blocked doorways; these had been plundered and partially destroyed in antiquity, and no precise evidence for fixing their date was brought to light, but the hoard of 10,000 beads found in the previous season, as well as a small Sumerian figure of lapis lazuli, might originally have belonged to them. Architecturally these graves were more massive and better

constructed than the so-called 'royal tombs' of Ur, and they might also be compared with those of the later third dynasty of Ur; the high level, too, on the mound at which their roofs stood was surprising, but the much earlier levels of the period of Jamdat Naṣr revealed themselves just below the foundations of the tombs. The *chef d'œuvre* of the season's work, however, was a magnificent head in bronze of life-size, possibly a portrait of Sargon of Agade (*c.* 2475 B.C.), which must take rank among the artistic masterpieces of antiquity; no Mesopotamian monument can match the beauty of this noble head, sensuous and alive, majestic in poise and delicately stylized, a portrait worthy of one of the great monarchs of antiquity. The season was noteworthy also for the recovery of numerous fragments of limestone from inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, discovered in the floor of the temple of Nabû and belonging to his repairs of the foundation of Ashur-nāṣir-apli, whose sculptures were found *in situ*; some 120 of these pieces came from a triplicate text of one of the latest of his inscriptions. These were, so far as possible, put together, and squeezes were taken of their texts, but the stones had to be reburied owing to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of removing them; and enough of the text was reconstituted to show that it was of exceptional importance as proving that Cyrus I, whom it mentioned, was contemporary with Ashurbanipal, thus putting his date back nearly a century. Another important inscription unearthed during this season was a perfect six-sided prism of Esarhaddon, throwing fresh light on the extraordinarily interesting story of the events immediately following the murder of Sennacherib. The excavators found also a quantity of painted ceramic ware, assigned to a date early in the third millennium B.C., and also coins of the Roman and Parthian empires, as well as foundations of buildings as late as the thirteenth century A.D.

In the final season of 1931–2 Thompson was joined by M. E. L. Mallowan, who was already well known for archaeological work elsewhere; they resumed operations on the temple of Nabû and also examined Sennacherib's palace and a large building on flat ground below the mound of Quyunjuq, where traces of occupation running from the Neo-Assyrian into the Roman and Parthian periods were found. Two Hittite hieroglyphic inscriptions, the sole specimens found at Nineveh, added lustre to the last season that Thompson spent there. Glass, too, and other objects ranging from the Roman to the Middle-Arab period, approximately the fourteenth century A.D., were found in considerable quantities.

This same season, however, saw Thompson triumphantly set the seal to his life-work as an archaeologist, not so much by the discoveries that he made in, or the objects that he recovered from, the historic levels as by the results which he obtained from devoting a large part of his resources to an examination of the pre-Assyrian levels. He had for some time been impressed by the long sequence of early Mesopotamian settlements revealed by deep excavation at Ur, Uruk and Kish, and he determined to see for the first time what lay hidden within the lowest levels of Quyunjuq. This deep sounding was carried out in collaboration with Mallowan. Starting on one of the highest points of the mound, they dug a deep pit from its top down to virgin soil, a formidable operation which necessitated digging through ninety feet of the accumulated rubble of more than four thousand years which separated the medieval levels from the first prehistoric foundation. After many weeks of anxious work the picks struck virgin soil, a clean red shale on which the earliest Ninevites had built their first settlement. This sounding proved that no less than four-fifths of the great pile which goes by the name of Quyunjuq belongs to pre-Assyrian times. The ceramic ware found in the successive pre-Assyrian levels could be broadly divided into five distinct periods, of which the latest, Ninevite V, existed some time near the beginning of the third millenium B.C. Beneath this lay a long series of plain wares covering the epoch of Jamdat Naṣr and the lengthy cycle of periods of Uruk which have since been revealed in detail on more southerly sites in the Mesopotamian valley. Ninevite II, which lay about sixty feet below the Assyrian level, showed yet another complete change in character and yielded a large collection of painted sherds of the ware of Tall Ḥalâf and Samârrah, which were thus for the first time revealed in their proper sequence as the earliest forms of painted Mesopotamian ceramic ware, made many centuries earlier than had ever been suspected. It followed that Ninevite I, a simpler version of Ninevite II, lying at the bottom of the mound, must have been considerably older in time than the earliest painted fabric of al'Ubaid, which is found in the first settlements in southern Mesopotamia. This evidence agrees with the geological formation of the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, of which the southern half is alluvial, much later in formation than the northern soil.

The general framework of this sequence of settlements at Nineveh fits in well with subsequent discoveries on other sites and is a valuable yardstick by which to measure the successive

fabrics of early man in the Mesopotamian valley, from the dawn of agriculture to the beginnings of fully developed urban life. In that long sequence of stages writing was invented, the wheel was introduced, metallurgy developed, and architecture weaned from rush-work to the magnificent structures, first of mud-brick, then of stone and burnt brick ornamented and embellished with the rare and subtle devices that mankind in course of time devised. Inevitably one thinks of the early whisperings of Sumerian man ushering in the beginnings of human development:

> O Reed-hut, O Reed-hut! Wall, wall!
> Hearken O Reed-hut, consider, O Wall!

The richness, depth of accumulation, and wide extent of these early levels of occupation can leave no doubt whatever that Nineveh must have exerted as wide a domination in the upper Mesopotamian valley in the prehistoric and proto-historic periods as it did in later Assyrian days. To reach these levels on an extensive scale and work in them over a period of years would probably cost not less than £50,000, and it is unlikely that this task will be undertaken in the present generation, but whoever undertakes it will assuredly reap a harvest corresponding to the outlay in metal-work, architecture, statuary, jewellery, ceramic ware, and inscriptions. This much can be deduced from these soundings and from discoveries made at much smaller mounds such as Gawrah and Arpachiyah in the neighbourhood.

Briefly, the results of these four seasons of excavation at Nineveh, although the site had been dug by previous archaeologists, were eminently satisfactory. Thompson and his colleagues made soundings in the prehistoric levels beneath the classical Nineveh which enabled them to determine the sequence of prehistoric occupation from the time of the first dwellers in huts to a period between 3000 and 2500 B.C., and thereby to throw much light on the dating of neighbouring civilizations, whose relations to the scheme of prehistory had not yet been fully settled. Thus a detailed examination of impressions of primitive seals and other miscellaneous objects showed Elamite influence on early Assyrian art which could be brought into connexion with that of Ur and Uruk, the Erech of the Bible. They revealed also a gap when no building of importance was done between this period and *c.* 1800 B.C., after which an era of vigorous Assyrian building began. Finally, they confirmed what had been previously noted, that little or no information could be obtained from the site after *c.* 640 B.C., although Nineveh itself was not

destroyed till 612 B.C.; hence Thompson was led to make the plausible suggestion that Ashurbanipal, conscious of the steady approach of the enemy who eventually destroyed the city, had moved the seat of government to Ḫarrân.

From this general account of Thompson's work and discoveries it is evident that his name will take an honoured place in the annals of those who have devoted their lives to research into ancient history between Tigris and Euphrates. At Nineveh he kept alive the high tradition set by Layard and those other early excavators whose memory he always cherished. His scholarship was of the best Victorian standard, robust, penetrating and alive. Those who worked with him had good reason also to admire other qualities in him, his alert bearing, his physical and mental vigour, and the generous quality of his mind revealed in the encouragement and credit which he readily gave to those who assisted him and particularly to young workers setting out on the path that he had trod. He lived hard and enjoyed life, and he handled his Arab workmen with zest, humour and understanding, thereby maintaining the high prestige which went with the English name in the Middle East. In conclusion, there is perhaps no clearer memory of 'C.T.', as his friends all called him (curiously reflecting the well-known abbreviation of the title of the volumes of 'Cuneiform Texts' to which he had contributed so much) than the half-glimpse of him riding out before dawn to the mound which he loved so well, to try the fortunes of yet another day at Quyunjuq. This section, too, of this memoir will hardly be considered complete without mention of the constant companion of his labours, his wife, who shared the hardships of 'Irâq with him for three seasons, those of 1929–32, welcoming friends and making colleagues feel themselves at home in the little house with its garden of roses looking out on one side towards Mosul and the Tigris and on the other to Nineveh and the snow-capped top of the Jabal Maqlûb.

In the intervals of these extensive and arduous labours Thompson and Hutchinson found time to compile *A Century of Exploration at Nineveh* (1929), which they described as 'a city of prime importance in the history of the ancient world', and where the work of exploration was carried out for ninety years, from Rich till Thompson himself, entirely by Englishmen or under English auspices. In this book of some 150 pages they gave an admirably readable account of these excavations with the purpose not merely of glorifying their own countrymen but also of rousing the interest of Englishmen at home with a view

to raising funds to continue and extend the work; for, as they say, the larger mound of Quyunjuq, covering the actual remains of ancient Nineveh, is half a mile long by a quarter of a mile broad and not yet fully investigated, while the smaller mound of Nabî Yûnus is left for future investigation. They then reckoned the cost of a season's work at £1,000 on such a site. The book is attractively written and well illustrated by drawings and photographs, and it contains a wealth of information, the fruits of Thompson's observation, on other subjects than archaeology.

Excavation in the field in winter by no means interfered with literary work at home in the summer, and Thompson was able, in addition to issuing reports of his work at Nineveh, to bring out several new books. The first was *A Catalogue of the Late Babylonian Tablets in the Bodleian Library, Oxford* (1927), reproduced in typescript. The Library had three small collections of about 130 or 135 whole or fragmentary tablets, mostly private contracts of the Neo-Babylonian and Seleucid ages, and the Catalogue contains a brief account of each tablet, with three plates of the cuneiform text of the eight most important documents, transliterations and translations of many others, and a list of all the proper names occurring in every document. Thompson used also to tell a curious story of one of these tablets, that once in the East he had 'forged' a tablet to show a curious friend how the ancient Babylonians wrote and that he was many years afterwards astonished to find this very 'forgery' in the Bodleian collection, to which some innocent donor had given it! It is now discreetly entered in the Catalogue as such without any other description.

Thompson had now for some time been at work on the text of the legend of Gilgamish, of which he had newly collated and recopied all the known tablets in the British Museum. The first-fruits of this toil appeared in *The Epic of Gilgamish: a New Translation . . . rendered literally into English Hexameters* (1928). Here he knew that he was taking risks; for in speaking of the poetry of the Accadian version of the story he said:

> Expressed in a language which has perhaps the simplicity, not devoid of cumbrousness, of Hebrew rather than the flexibility of Greek, it can nevertheless describe the whole range of human emotions in the aptest language. . . . Whether there is a justification for taking the risk of turning it into ponderous English hexameters is an open question, but in doing so I have done my utmost to preserve an absolutely literal translation.

The version has, of course, been variously judged, and it will

suffice here to say with one reviewer that it betrays the same zest in the human story as the translator shows in everything to which he has put his hand. In fact, the rendering is spirited, though somewhat unpolished, and so not inaptly reflects the rather cumbrous diction and rude style of the original poem. This translation was followed by *The Epic of Gilgamish. Text, Transliteration, and Notes* (1930), in which Thompson presented all the known text with not a little new matter. This is a magnificent piece of work; every fragment of the text, freshly copied in a bold cuneiform script, is put so far as possible in its proper place in the sequence of the tablets and furnished with critical notes, while the whole original text is transliterated with meticulous accuracy for the benefit of those who cannot consult or do not wish to follow the cuneiform text; and a brief introduction and philological commentary on obscure or difficult passages are added. Thus one of the most famous works of Accadian literature, of which the recovery from Mesopotamian sands is an achievement almost exclusively of English scholarship, is given to the world by an English scholar in an edition that is not likely to be superseded for many years.

The objects found at Nineveh included several important historical prisms, to which reference has already been made. Two of the best preserved and most important of these documents were now edited by Thompson in *The Prisms of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal found at Nineveh* (1931) in autograph with a transliteration of the usual accuracy and a translation that, if it was not correct in every detail, always caught the sense. The editor further added a brief but interesting introduction discussing the light shed on the obscurity in which the story of the murder of Sennacherib is shrouded by the new prism of Esarhaddon, who in his opinion ought now to be regarded as the instigator of his brother's crime.

Many of Thompson's friends, aware of his versatility, had long known that from time to time he sought relief from learned research in writing poetry, but they were hardly prepared for the announcement in 1933 that he had won the Seatonian Prize at Cambridge, which was open to graduates of the University without regard to age or standing for a poem on a religious subject. The theme set was 'Ignatius', to which Thompson was undoubtedly attracted by its Anatolian background, and the best parts of the poem, which is entitled simply *Ignatius* (1933), are those in which Eastern scenes are depicted. Thus Smyrna is described at the moment when

The big moon rising, half eclipsed by masts,
And every boat in shadow'd silence still'd,
(Or rarely scraping 'gainst her sister's gunwale,
When some half-sleeping sailor stirred himself),
Piled high with seines still salty from the sea,
Meshed with a silver marquetry of scales,
A hansel from the forenoon's booty reft,
Tricked in the moonbeams, like the Galaxy,
And ink-stained cuttle-fish and mullet red
Flicked out their little lives in heaps on deck

in verse of vivid imagery, revealing a keen eye for just those little details that give life to a picture. It is beautiful stuff, showing here deep feeling for the sea as elsewhere an intimate knowledge of Eastern scenery and ways of life; but the hero of the poem was perhaps one with whom Thompson could not by temperament have had much sympathy. Some of the sentiments put into his mouth were hardly natural in an aged bishop on the eve of his martyrdom, and he tended to become something of a lay figure serving to convey the poet's own reflections on travelling by camel across a desert, on riding down some 'stately avenue' of cedars on Lebanon, or on the dust and flies of the bazaar. Yet there is much in this poem that strikes a chord and reflects a poetic cast of mind and a genuine love of nature. A different kind of poem is *Digger's Fancy* (1938). This is a play of which the scene is laid in an archaeologist's camp close by a Mesopotamian mound covering an ancient site; it is light reading with several good descriptive passages, and the language is not so artificial as that of Thompson's other literary ventures.

Apart from the books here mentioned, Thompson contributed numerous articles on archaeological and Assyriological subjects to various journals such as *Archaeologia* and the *Annals of Art and Archaeology*, the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* and the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* and *Iraq*, of which he became editor in 1936, the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, and the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* in England, to the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* in the U.S.A., to *Babyloniaca* in France, and to the *Archiv für Orientforschung* in Germany; he was also a frequent reviewer of books on Assyriology and kindred subjects in the *Literary Supplement* and a contributor to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. The long list and high quality of his miscellaneous writings in such publications is enough alone to

have won him a considerable reputation and is a sufficient proof alike of his industry and his perseverance. His gifts were widely recognized both by the University of Oxford and by learned societies; thus he became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1910, took the degree of D.Litt. at Oxford in 1925, and became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1934. Finally, in 1937 he was elected to succeed Prof. S. H. Langdon as Shillito Reader in Assyriology at Oxford, thus becoming the second holder of this post; the duties of his office, however, interfered but little with his research, as the entire absence of financial assistance discourages all but the most enthusiastic students. Thompson therefore had had but a few, of whom one was O. R. Gurney, his destined successor in the Readership, when war broke out again and put an end to all such studies.

Thompson was a man who lived consciously for certain interconnected ideals. He was ambitious, as every pioneer must be, to advance the knowledge of his own branch of science, and to that end he was resolutely determined to keep himself physically fit for the field-work that might fall to his lot; for he had small confidence in Assyriological studies conducted wholly from books and at home. He thought little of the Orientalist who did not know the East at first hand. In order to keep himself fit he gave up smoking when quite a young man, and he appeared to be always *modicus cibi* for one of his muscular frame. In consequence of this self-discipline, which had nothing of asceticism (except in the etymological sense of the term) about it, he was always in sound health and good spirits. His keen desire, as Cadet, Volunteer, and Territorial Officer at the various stages of his life, to be ready, if the time ever came, to serve his country as a soldier, led him in the same direction, and his physical strength and bodily powers stood him in good stead throughout the first war as it had served him well on holidays and archaeological expeditions. He was therefore naturally one of the first to offer himself for national service in the second war; for he had always lived in training. The ideal man in his view was one who could endure heat and cold, hunger and thirst, all the discomforts and hardships of Eastern travel, and he accordingly admired the Arabs of the desert, with whom he was wont to compare unfavourably those of the town, for their powers of endurance. Much, however, as his Arab foremen and servants were devoted to him, he recognized their weak points and would say that they were dull company, having commonly

but two subjects of conversation amongst themselves, money and women.

Thompson brought many subsidiary interests to his professional work. He had an excellent memory, which was indispensable for one who had to hold the cuneiform syllabary in his head. He had considerable skill with pencil and paintbrush, a useful accomplishment in an archaeologist. He knew much about various processes in arts and crafts and was able to turn his knowledge to full account in deciphering chemical texts. He had studied prehistoric implements and was a good judge of pottery, as an excavator must needs be. He was a botanist who could take a book on flowers and plants with him when sailing on the Norfolk Broads or shooting in Scotland; and he made good use of this knowledge in his study of Assyrian herbs and drugs. He was a capital sailor, latterly keeping his own sailing-boat at Eynsham above Oxford on the Thames. To sail and manage his own vessel for days on end, to cook his own meals and sleep on board, was his ideal holiday; once afloat, he had no desire to spend more time than he absolutely needed on land. A constant visitor at Boars' Hill and companion on these expeditions on the Thames was Gadd, the distinguished Assyriologist, now Assistant Keeper in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, who had been for many years his closest friend. He once, too, took his daughter, then a child of tender years, for a fortnight's sailing, rough as it might be, on the Broads and found the expedition a complete success. On such occasions few natural sights escaped him; he was as skilled in the flight of birds as in the forms of flowers, and he fished as readily as he shot.

He had other recreations indoors as well as out-of-doors. He was a great lover of Dickens and Mark Twain, quoting them easily and aptly, and he rarely travelled without a novel, usually of the one or the other, in his pocket, and he was almost equally fond of several of the lighter English authors; at the same time he was greatly addicted to reading detective stories. He enjoyed also light opera and the theatre and, above all, the cinema which he visited every week, and he used to say that he solved many of his hardest problems as he watched the pictures floating across the screen. Contrariwise, he had no tolerance for anything that he considered aesthetic or 'high-brow', using both words solely as terms of contempt. He was, too, no recluse but a man of many friends and, while he kept up old friendships, he easily made new ones, and he delighted to entertain all and sundry in

his house on Boars' Hill or in College, especially those from the British Museum. He was also an excellent letter-writer and by this means maintained regular contact with a number of friends and colleagues. Those who had once won his regard could be sure that no separation of time or place would ever be permitted διαλύειν τὴν φιλίαν, and henceforth their memories will cherish the vision of a sturdy and upstanding man, of open countenance and transparent honesty, with the kindest and loyalest heart, modest about his own achievements but candid in his prejudices, which were those of a thoroughly sane, wholesome, vigorous, fearless Englishman.

As a scholar Thompson was the last representative in England of a phase of Assyriology that converted it from a discovery into a science. The original diggers and decipherers had been long dead and their *epigoni* had been busy for a decade, possibly two decades, producing the first grammars and dictionaries as well as catalogues of collections of tablets, when he went up to Cambridge. When he entered the British Museum the systematic publication of texts was already in progress, and his place was marked out for him in this, the third generation of Assyriologists. For forty years he contributed his share of the task, sometimes by steady and laborious work and sometimes with the brilliant success of the original pioneers. The long series of *Cuneiform Texts*, with much of which no future student of the subject will ever be able to dispense, belong to this first class; the second class is represented by the *Assyrian Herbal* and the *Dictionary of Assyrian Chemistry and Geology*, on which writers on the history of science have already heavily drawn. His integrity as a scholar was complete. He always went back to the original tablets and would accept no reading at second hand; his honesty compelled him immediately to discard any view that he had expressed so soon as it was proved wrong and to look for another solution of the problem. He showed, too, a singular aptitude in bringing together and joining fragments of tablets that had become separated whether in the original destruction of some ancient library or through the inevitable risks of modern excavation, and he was thus able to fill gaps in many texts. At the same time he had not the type of mind that delighted to spend years over an immensely complex problem but preferred a number of small but loosely connected or distinct problems that could each be separately attacked and be brought to their several conclusions; he pursued a wide variety of subjects, applying a sound common sense and a fund of knowledge that enabled him to answer

questions that had baffled others. Some of his work, as of all men, will be superseded in the light of increasing knowledge, but even here he will have carried the problem further than his predecessors; but much of his work will certainly stand the test of time and then pass into the common stock of accepted facts.

As Thompson once said of his revered teacher King, that 'he was a man of great energy and persistence with a love of the open air, and consequently not only in book-learning but in athletic habit he was fit to follow the footsteps of the earlier English Orientalists, who divided their time *domi militiaeque*, between the study and the field', so he himself might, and indeed would, have been delighted to be described; for the words exactly described both men, each a rare combination of archaeologist and philologist.

When the second war broke out Thompson left no stone unturned to serve his country once again in some active capacity and was bitterly disappointed that the military authorities refused to accept any man of his age. His chance, however, was to come, and he enlisted in the Home Guard on the very day that it was formed and in due course took command of the River Patrol on the Upper Thames. He at once threw himself heart and soul into this work, but he strained his heart by the excessive physical labour which it required of him, often already tired by a long and exhausting day of intellectual work; and on top of this strain he sustained a grievous blow, from which he never recovered, in the death of his elder son, a Flight-Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, while returning from a bombing raid over enemy territory in April 1941. Six weeks after this event, on 23 May 1941, Thompson fell down dead as he was coming off duty with the River Patrol. He died serving his country in uniform as he would have wished and *felix opportunitate mortis* in dying in a moment at the first attack and after no lingering or painful illness.

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G. R. DRIVER