GEORGE MACDONALD

SIR GEORGE MACDONALD

1862–1940

GEORGE MACDONALD was born at Elgin in 1862, where his father, Dr. James Macdonald, was a master in the Elgin Academy. In the same year Dr. Macdonald was appointed Rector of Ayr Academy and moved with his family to that historic town, where his son George was brought up and received his early education.

Dr. James Macdonald, besides being a scholar, was an antiquary of some note. He was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and one of its Vice-Presidents. He interested himself particularly in the Roman remains in Scotland, and, in 1896, was appointed a Rhind Lecturer in Archaeology, his subject being 'The Roman Occupation of North Britain'. He took an active part in the excavation of the Roman fort of Birrens in Dumfriesshire, and contributed to the report a study of the inscribed stones found there. In his *Tituli Hunteriani: An Account of the Roman Stones in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow*, he published an account of the Distance Slabs and other fragments collected from the Antonine Wall. It was natural, therefore, that George Macdonald, brought up in an atmosphere of scholarship and archaeology, should have found throughout his life matter for research and recreation in both studies.

He left Ayr in 1878, after taking the first place in a bursary competition, to continue his education at Edinburgh University, where he gained many distinctions, taking his M.A. degree in 1882 with First Class Honours in Classics, and also obtaining a scholarship awarded to the most distinguished graduate of the year in classics. Thereafter he spent the winter in Germany, studying in Stuttgart, and returned in 1883 for a further course at Edinburgh University. In the summer of this year he also gained the Ferguson Scholarship in Classics, open to graduates of all

the four Scottish Universities. The greater part of the following winter he passed in Italy, deepening his interest in ancient history and art, a taste which was further stimulated by subsequent travel, both in Italy and Greece. In 1884 he went up to Balliol. He was precluded by age from entering for a scholarship, but he took a First Class in Classical Moderations, and in 1887 he passed out with a First Class in *Literae Humaniores*.

It was natural, perhaps, that, following the family tradition, he should take up teaching as his profession. Accordingly, he accepted the offer of a mastership in the Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow, where his father was then Rector, and he remained there for five years. At the end of that period he was nominated by Professor Gilbert Murray, who held the Chair of Greek in Glasgow University, to act as his substitute, and he afterwards remained as his senior assistant.

It was in 1900, while still holding his Assistantship, that he was brought into touch with the Scottish Education Department, receiving a special temporary appointment as Assistant Director of Higher Inspection. In 1904 he became Lecturer in Classical Archaeology in the University, a post which he resigned the same year on joining the Education Department.

Though closely associated with the Coin Cabinet of the Hunterian Museum for several years, in connexion with the preparation of his *Catalogue of Greek Coins* there, it was not until the year 1905 that he became Honorary Curator—a well-merited appointment which he retained until his death.

His work for the Education Department had brought him to the notice of Sir Henry Craik and Sir John Struthers, then occupying the respective posts of Secretary and Assistant Secretary. In Macdonald they recognized not only a scholar of distinction, but one possessed of a personality which would be invaluable in the public service. Accordingly, on resigning his teaching appointments in Glasgow in 1904, he was at once appointed to the permanent staff

of the Department as second Assistant Secretary. During the next eighteen years he advanced through the various grades of promotion, until finally, on the retirement of Sir John Struthers in 1922, he succeeded him as Secretary, with the unanimous approval of all concerned.

From the early years of his service in the Department his influence made itself felt. In the Education Act of 1908, especially in those sections of the Bill which dealt with the development of secondary and higher education, his skilful administrative touch and his deep interest in the secondary schools of Scotland could be recognized. The Scottish leaving-certificate examination, regarded by educationalists as one of the best of national examinations, was Macdonald's creation. He was deeply interested in the preparation of the papers, and it is said that very few of the drafts submitted to him reached the printers without evidence of his careful editing.

One effect of the 1908 Act was the transference from London to Edinburgh of a substantial part of the departmental staff in order to deal with those developments which called for a more direct contact with Scotland than Whitehall could offer. This change brought nearly one-half of the office staff under Macdonald's immediate supervision, as head of the newly formed Edinburgh branch. Though this partial transference necessitated very frequent visits to London on Macdonald's part, it was a move in a direction which he greatly favoured, and one which later reached its final accomplishment in the almost complete transference of the staff of the Department to Edinburgh, leaving at Dover House only a sufficient representation to cover parliamentary business, to maintain direct contact with the Treasury, and to serve the needs of the Secretary for Scotland, the titular Head of the Department.

Much of the success achieved in solving the difficult matters of salary scales and superannuation was due to Macdonald's tireless energy and unfailing tact, and many passages in the Report of Lord Emmott's Committee,

appointed to inquire into the question of a contributory scheme for the superannuation of teachers, bear the impression of his influence. A historical note on Scottish teachers' superannuation, which is embodied in the Report, affords an excellent example of his unrivalled skill in the composition of official memoranda. Similarly, his hand may be recognized in the Report of a departmental committee, under the Chairmanship of Lord Mackenzie, which dealt with Scottish educational endowments, in 1927. The earlier part of that Report consisted of a historical survey which was based on a memorandum of Macdonald's, and, as showing his powers of composition, it may be stated that this, which was described as a perfect specimen of an official memorandum, was dictated by him to shorthand typists working in relays, and with no more than a few factual jottings in front of him. The work, though interrupted by interviews and routine business, was completed within a few hours, and the dictated version required little more than the correction of typing errors. He was gifted with a wonderful memory, and possessed the faculty of being able to recall any fact that was stored there, and to apply it correctly without the need of verification. It was seldom that he found it necessary to make jottings preparatory to the composition of any minute or memorandum he had to frame.

Wonderful efficiency combined with a somewhat brusque manner in official business made many people, during his official career, afraid of him, but those who knew him best were warmly attached to him by his innate goodness, integrity, and kindness, high qualities which, combined with his outstanding abilities, commanded the respect and admiration of all. He was always courteous to strangers, but quickly sensed a bore and as quickly dismissed him. His minutes were models of completeness, as dictated, and seldom needed correction or alteration. Conversely, he could take in the contents of a document at a glance, grasping the details and the whole gist of the matter in

question. He took a kindly interest in all members of his staff, and if he could recommend any for better posts outside the Service he did not hesitate to do so.

The Royal Scottish Museum was departmentally under the control of the Scottish Education Department, and its affairs came under the special care of Macdonald. In this the Museum was fortunate, for his orderly mind and antiquarian leanings qualified him particularly for such a charge.

It was the obvious appointment when Macdonald was nominated to the Royal Commission on Museums and Galleries in 1927. In connexion with this inquiry he went abroad in the summer of 1928, visiting museums and galleries in Germany, and making himself acquainted at first hand with the methods of display and other matters of museum technique and administration practised there. It was a source of gratification to him that the Royal Scottish Museum, which he regarded as his own province, came in for special commendation in the Report of the Commission. He was duly appointed a member of the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries when that body was established in 1931. Here his wide range of knowledge made him of special value on the various subcommittees appointed to consider matters of widely diverse character.

From 1918 to the date of his death he had acted as one of the two expert Reporters for the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland under their research scheme, and to his judgement were entrusted the whole departments of History, Economics, and Literature, so comprehensive was the range of his scholarship.

From 1908, when he came to reside more permanently in Edinburgh, he was elected a member of the Edinburgh University Library Committee, and from 1918 till 1934 he acted as Chairman. Here, as in all other bodies with which he was connected, his wide knowledge, wise judgement, and gift for organization made him an outstanding member

of the Committee, and his services in this sphere were specially referred to when the University of Edinburgh conferred on him the degree of LL.D. in 1935.

On the appointment of the Fine Arts Commission for Scotland Macdonald became also a member of this body. The description kindly supplied by the Secretary to the Commission, Mr. A. E. Haswell Miller, gives such a vivid picture of Macdonald's behaviour on many such committees that it is worth quoting:

> He seemed to be the member who performed the work of condensing and clarifying decisions and putting them into a form which was unanswerable. He would say very little, listen until arguments ceased to be very useful or constructive, or up to the stage when members sometimes began to drift into individual discussion with each other over some particular point or detail which interested them; Sir George would be seen quietly writing, and just as it seemed impossible to reach agreement and exhaustion began to set in, he would say 'How would this meet the case?' and, at once, the whole discussion would appear as a clear decision. His draft would have the additional quality of taking into consideration the reply it would receive, and his answer to that in turn was ready.

In 1933 he was appointed a member of the University Grants Commission, an appointment which he retained till his death, latterly fulfilling his obligation even though far from well. I am indebted to Sir Frederic Kenyon for the following note of his service.

> In a small Committee dealing with a wide range of subjects each member must represent some particular field of knowledge and experience, in addition to the wisdom which he can bring to its common deliberations. In all these respects Macdonald's services to the Committee were of outstanding value. He was a classical scholar of unquestionable eminence; 'he was a Scotsman of the purest water' and he had an intimate acquaintance with the educational system of Scotland. These qualities made him invaluable in dealing with the Scottish Universities, since he was fully acquainted with all the intricacies of their history and could meet their representatives on terms of at least equal knowledge,

where his southern colleagues would have been at the mercy of the dialectic ability and persuasiveness of the north. At the same time his humour and broad humanity smoothed over all difficulties, and kept everyone in a good temper. Add to this his wisdom and judgment, and essential fairness of mind, and it will be realized that he was an exceptionally valuable member of a body which has very delicate duties to perform in an important branch of the educational system of the United Kingdom.

Macdonald's activities fall naturally under two heads—the work of his profession as a civil servant and an educationalist, which has been dealt with in the foregoing pages, and the work of his leisure as a numismatist and as an antiquary, especially in the field of Roman archaeology. He was equipped in a special degree for such studies by his classical education and his upbringing.

Sir George Hill has kindly furnished the following note of his services to numismatics:

It was a fortunate chance that turned Macdonald's attention to Greek numismatics. The Hunterian Collection, already known to scholars by Combe's catalogue of the Greek coins, was practically inaccessible until he came across it at Glasgow and, realizing its importance, brought it once more to light. Another fortunate chance produced a benefactor, Mr. James Stevenson of Largs, thanks to whose generosity the splendid *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the Hunterian Collection* appeared in three stately volumes from 1899 to 1905. Macdonald had been unknown as a numismatist, but these volumes at once placed him in the first rank. They illustrate that remarkable power of gripping the details of any new matter presented to his attention, which was characteristic of all his activities. In preparing this catalogue he became specially interested in the Seleucid coins, in which the collection was particularly strong, and on them he contributed to the *Numismatic Chronicle* and other periodicals, from 1902 to 1907, a number of useful articles. That he could deal with the broad aspects of a subject which is too often presented by writers in a bewildering complexity of minutiae, repellent to archaeologists and historians alike, was shown by his Rhind Lectures on *Coin Types, their Origin and Development* (1905). It is an admirably lucid and sensible account of a matter about which a good deal of nonsense had recently been written; his acute dissection of such theories left them mangled; but his book was constructive as well as critical,

and is probably still the best introduction to the subject. (His small book on the *Evolution of Coinage*, published in 1916, has the same qualities.) Recognition of his power of clear analysis and exposition led Barclay Head to invite him to contribute to the second edition of the *Historia Numorum*, which appeared in 1911. Macdonald was responsible for the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, and Egypt under the Romans; the two former sections full of tangled problems which he stated with exemplary clearness and often unravelled satisfactorily. His last contribution to pure Greek numismatics seems to have been made in 1919, when he communicated to the British Academy a metrological note on the *Silver Coinage of Crete*. But in the applied science he produced an admirable essay in his chapter on the Hellenic kingdoms of Syria, Bactria, and Parthia in the Cambridge History of India, which is not only a most valuable addition to the literature of the subject but a remarkable example of his sound logic, lucid and readable presentation of deductions from the study of minutiae, and combination of historical and numismatic evidence.

His publications on Roman numismatics were fewer, but included catalogues of the medallions and contorniates in the Hunterian Museum (in the *Numismatic Chronicle*) and from 1905 onwards he produced at intervals reports on Roman coins found in Scotland, which of course have considerable bearing on the dates of the Roman occupation. His most striking contribution connected with Roman coins was however not strictly numismatic. He was invited by H.M. Treasury to investigate the circumstances of the Corbridge Find of 1911, with a view to deciding whether the coins 'were of ancient time hidden', in other words whether they were to be treated as Treasure Trove. The masterly Report which he prepared, showing his characteristic thoroughness and mastery of detail, decided in the affirmative. It was published in the *Journal of Roman Studies* (1912).

As the leading Scottish expert on coins it fell to him to examine a number of medieval hoards discovered in Scotland. From 1905 to 1922 articles which he published in the *Numismatic Chronicle* and elsewhere showed that he could handle English and Scottish coins with the same dexterity as Greek and Roman, even though his theory of the Crosraguel coins may not be altogether acceptable. He made a real contribution, in 1913, to the solution of the tiresome problem of the classification of Edward pennies.

Macdonald's distinction as a numismatist was widely recognized abroad, as may be gathered from the honorary memberships which were conferred upon him by foreign learned societies. He

was an Honorary Member of the American Numismatic Society, of the Vienna Numismatic Society, of the British Numismatic Society, and of the Numismatic Society of Zagreb. He was awarded the *Prix Allier de Hauteroche* in 1907, and the medal of the American Numismatic Society in 1926. At home the Royal Numismatic Society, which had already given him its medal in 1913, recognized his great services by electing him as its President on the occasion of the centenary in 1936. He presided over the International Congress held in that year and his presidential address on 'Fifty Years of Greek Numismatics' surveyed the progress and notably the changes in method and tendencies in that period. It was his last appearance as a numismatist, and a fitting crown to a distinguished career of something like forty years.

From his youth Macdonald must have imbibed much information from his father on the subject of the Roman occupation of Scotland. Moreover, in his frequent visits to the Hunterian Coin Cabinet he must often have pondered over the collection of altars and distance-slabs from the Antonine Wall brought together in the Hunterian Museum which, in later life, he was himself to do so much to interpret.

In 1895 the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland undertook the excavation of the important Roman fort of Birrens in Dumfriesshire, in which, as stated above, his father, Dr. James Macdonald, took a very active part. Though George Macdonald took no share in this work, being fully employed in his numismatic studies, frequent discussions in his father's house must have made him familiar with its problems. But the excavation of Birrens was probably fraught with other consequences to him, for it no doubt brought him into contact with Francis Haverfield who was to become, in later years, a close friend as a fellow worker in the study of Roman Britain.

No doubt also the investigation of the Antonine Wall by the Glasgow Archaeological Society, between the years 1890 and 1893, and their subsequent Report thereon, published in 1899, must have provided a further stimulus to his interest in the subject.

In 1900 he became a member of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and, on a vacancy occurring the following year in the office of Curator of Coins, Macdonald was elected to fill it, and so took a seat on the Council which he occupied for the rest of his life. It was auspicious that the advent of Macdonald to the Council, and the establishment of his permanent home in Edinburgh, coincided with a movement by the Society towards the study of Roman sites in Scotland, which, for the most part, were connected with the Roman Wall. In 1902 came the excavation of Castle Cary, to be followed the next year by that of Rough Castle. In the former year Macdonald obtained his first practical experience of Roman field-archaeology when, with Mr. Alexander Park, he assisted at the excavation of the fort on the Bar Hill, near Croy. The fort was situated on the estate of Mr. Whitelaw of Gartshore, who, with remarkable public spirit, bore the whole cost of what he desired should be an exhaustive examination of the site. For three years the work was carried on, and was productive of such notable results as could not have failed to stimulate the enthusiasm of any excavator. On the very first day of digging, by a combination of chance and acute observation, a well was located, and in due course entirely cleared out. The relics recovered were truly remarkable; comprising capitals and bases of pillars, many feet of rounded columns, an altar and a fragment of an inscribed tablet, and much besides, including such evidences of the daily life of the occupants of the fort as boots, arrow-heads, a bag of iron tools, and thirteen coins. The excavation was noteworthy, however, not only for the numerous relics recovered from the well and elsewhere, but also for the discovery of a small earthwork in the middle of the larger fort, which, for the first time, gave the outlines of one of Agricola's fortified posts erected in A.D. 81 on the isthmus line.

From now onwards Macdonald proceeded to take an increasing interest in research on Roman sites, both in Scotland and south of the Border, and his skill as a numisma-

tist brought him into closer contact with antiquaries at home and elsewhere. The exploration of the Roman fort at Newstead by Mr. James Curle, between the years 1905 and 1910, was throughout a constant source of interest to him, not only from the exceptional numbers of coins and other relics which were recovered, but also from the historical data furnished by the structural remains and the defences.

In 1909 he received an invitation from the Trustees for the Dalrymple Lectureship in Archaeology, instituted in the University of Glasgow, to deliver a course of lectures on the Roman Wall in Scotland. The lectures were delivered in the following year and formed the main strand in his *Roman Wall in Scotland*, published in 1911. The book was aimed, as he tells us in his introduction, at interesting the ordinary cultivated reader rather than the specialist. None the less, it contains much relevant material previously inaccessible to students of the Antonine Wall.

His equipment as a scholar enabled him to review critically the literary tradition handed down by Roman authors from Tacitus to Marcellinus, and by native writers from Gildas to George Buchanan. Not the least valuable result of this publication was the awakening of public interest in the Wall, a result for which he specially appealed and which eventually led to the scheduling of certain sections of it for preservation by H.M. Office of Works.

But the line of the Wall could not at many points be clearly defined, and more work was required for the elucidation of its course, as well as of the sites of the forts that guarded it. As the years went by, Macdonald applied his leisure to carrying out an intensive survey. Ordnance map in hand, he traversed the isthmus day by day, as opportunity presented itself, tracing the line of the ditch, guided at times by a dip in the profile of a hedge or dyke, or by a crack in a gable, and making assurance doubly sure where necessary with the spade. The line of the ditch and Wall established, he turned his attention to the problems which only the excavation of the forts could solve.

In this inquiry he was greatly assisted by the researches of the Glasgow Archaeological Society which, from 1912 onwards, had carried out excavations with scholarly supervision. In all these Macdonald took a great personal interest, frequently visiting the sites and helping the diggers by his knowledge.

Following a suggestion made by Professor Haverfield that information of real importance for the history of Roman Scotland could, in all probability, be secured by what he termed 'a flying column', he and Macdonald, in 1913, made an expedition to Aberdeenshire and examined a camp at Glenmailen, near Ythan Wells. The evidence of the plan which they procured satisfied them that the earthworks represented a marching camp of Roman construction, but whether of Agricola or of Severus it was impossible to decide in the absence of determining relics. In the following summer Macdonald, by himself, examined another site claimed as Roman, at Raedykes, near Stonehaven in Angus. Here again the evidence provided by the plan, notably the occurrence shown on it of the characteristic *tituli* covering the entrances, left no doubt in the excavator's mind of the Roman character of the work, but, as at Glenmailen, the absence of relics made it impossible to assign it to a definite period.

Following these researches, and the further collation which they permitted of General Roy's plans in *The Military Antiquities of Great Britain* with the actual camps, Macdonald communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of London an exhaustive review of Roy's work, of which he held a high opinion.

In 1923, with the author of this Memoir, he commenced the excavation of the fort at Mumrills, near Falkirk, a task which continued for three and a half years, the work usually being carried on in the autumn and winter, as during these seasons the land was generally available. At Mumrills, the discovery of a bath-house, well preserved as Roman remains go, with its various chambers and heating and ventilating

systems, furnished Macdonald with fresh information on these features, which was to be of special value later on when he wrote his illuminating account of the bath-house at Chesters, on the occasion of the decennial pilgrimage along the Wall of Hadrian undertaken in 1930 by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-on-Tyne, of which he was an Honorary Member.

Subsequent to the excavation at Mumrills he undertook, on a less extensive scale, the exploration of the forts of Westerwood and Croy Hill. Like the majority of the forts on the Wall, the latter was situated on a very exposed hill-top, with the carse at the foot of it on the north and, in the farther distance, the frowning outline of the Kilsyth Hills. As the greater part of the work was carried on during the winter, when, as Macdonald has recorded, frost, fog, and snow combined to make things unpleasant, the notable results obtained are a tribute to his indomitable perseverance in the face of all obstacles.

It may not be out of place here to mention the enthusiasm and devotion with which 'Sir George' was regarded by the men whom he engaged from time to time to act as his foremen or to undertake research single-handed, and to whose intelligent supervision he paid tribute in his reports. He was equally happy in his relations with the proprietors and farmers on whose land he trespassed or carried out excavations.

In a paper contributed to the *Journal of Roman Studies* in 1919, entitled 'The Agricolan Occupation of North Britain', he set out the grounds for his belief in the extension of the Flavian occupation beyond the reign of Domitian. This he founded in great measure on the results of an examination of the finds of Roman coins in Scotland.

In the same year a close friendship was broken by the sudden death of Professor Haverfield, with whom for many years he had been on intimate terms. Haverfield died before publishing his series of six Ford Lectures, delivered in Oxford in 1907. Macdonald now took this unfinished

work in hand, and, under the title of *The Roman Occupation of Britain*, he gave it to the public with a biographical notice of his friend, in their joint names, in 1924.

Following a course of Rhind Lectures on the subject of Roman Britain, which he delivered in 1927, he contributed in 1930, as a Supplemental Paper to the Academy, a volume on Roman Britain which was in substance identical with an article contributed the same year to the *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission*. This, as a sequel to Professor Haverfield's *Roman Britain in 1914*, brought the results of further research down to 1928.

So much new material had come to light since the publication, in 1911, of his *Roman Wall in Scotland* that he felt the time was now ripe for a fuller review of the whole subject. Accordingly, he rewrote and greatly enlarged his earlier work, publishing it in 1934 under the same title. In this he has left a monument of his scholarship and learning which has made him pre-eminently the authority on the Roman occupation of Scotland.

But his archaeological researches were not confined to the Roman antiquities of Scotland. He was a member of the German Archaeological Institute, and in 1927, following an invitation to assist in the semi-jubilee celebration of the Römisch-Germanische Kommission at Frankfurt, he attended and communicated a paper in German in which he discussed the coast defences of Britain at the close of the Roman occupation. Subsequent to the death of Haverfield, Macdonald was a regular contributor to Pauly-Wissowa's *Real-Encyclopädie*.

From its inception, he had been a member of the Advisory Board for Scotland to the Ancient Monuments Department of H.M. Office of Works, and in 1924 he was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. He at once took an active interest in the Commission's work, succeeding Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bt., as its Chairman on his retirement ten years later, and from then onwards devoting no incon-

siderable portion of his time to its affairs. The survey of the antiquities of Orkney and Shetland was under way, a task of considerable magnitude not only because of the remoteness and comparative inaccessibility of many of the monuments, for the most part prehistoric, but also from their number and peculiar character. As the work of the Commission progressed, Macdonald himself visited the islands, spending parts of three summers in Shetland and personally visiting many of the sites and checking the descriptions. When the *Inventory* of the monuments in both counties, amounting to some 1,800 entries, was being prepared for the press, he not only revised and rewrote many of the original descriptions, but entirely recast and in great measure rewrote a long and elaborate Introduction.

Though previously his interest in antiquarian research had appeared to be confined to the study of Roman Britain, he quickly became familiar with the prehistoric facts and problems of his native land. Though the *Inventory* which he had done so much to complete was actually ready for the binder, he did not live to see it published, as its issue was held back on account of the war.

During the later years of his life, though hampered by ill health, there were not many days on which he did not find his way to the office of the Royal Commission to discuss progress with the Secretary.

He was elected President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1933, and occupied the position until his death. His active interest in the affairs of the Society was as constant as that which he gave to those of the Royal Commission, and his visits to its headquarters in the Museum of Antiquities were as regular. His communications to the Society were distinguished by their thoroughness, whether the subject was a description of a Roman fort, such as Croy Hill or Mumrills, or tombstones to the memory of German burgesses of the sixteenth century lying interred in the Island of Unst.

He was a member of the Society for the Promotion of

Roman Studies from its commencement in 1911, and was its President from 1921 to 1926, taking an active part as a member of its Editing Committee. He made numerous important contributions to its *Journal*. On the occasion of his seventieth birthday, in 1932, the annual volume of the *Journal* was dedicated to him as a distinguished scholar, and in recognition of the work that he had done on behalf of historical knowledge. This publication included a bibliography of his writings. Similarly, in honour of the same event, his German admirers dedicated a *Festschrift* in his honour.

He was a member of the National Trust for Scotland. For several years he served on its executive committee, and it was largely through his influence that the Trust acquired, by donation, several stretches of the Antonine Wall, as well as the Roman fort of Rough Castle.

In 1939, in failing health, and unable any longer to take part in field work, he contributed his last paper to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 'Miscellanea Romano-Caledonica II', gleanings from the work of recent years, comprising items relating to Roman Scotland, alike numismatic and topographical. He still followed with the greatest interest the researches of other and younger explorers in his own field of study, and a remarkably successful excavation by Mr. Ian Richmond of an Agricolan fort at Fendoch in Perthshire, wherein all the constructions had been of timber, gave him great satisfaction. He knew how much there still remained to be ascertained by the spade, and he heard of new discoveries of roads in Annandale and of a fort in Ayrshire, etc., with real pleasure.

For a number of years he had realized the need of a comprehensive survey of Scottish prehistory, and with a mass of undigested material contained in earlier records, and the scientific researches of modern archaeologists, he felt that the time had arrived when such a work should be written. He accordingly set his hand to it, but illness overtook him before he had proceeded far and, by the time he

had completed three chapters of what promised to be an invaluable contribution to Scottish archaeology, original in its conception and thorough in its treatment, he was forced to desist.

For long he had been a martyr to asthma, and an unusually severe attack in 1937 brought on cardiac trouble, from which he never really recovered. At times he rallied and took part in the work of the various bodies of which he was still a member, with his mental vigour unimpaired. Eventually, however, his failing health compelled him to relinquish most of his appointments, and, following a sudden seizure, he expired on 9 August 1940.

Many honours were conferred on him. In 1916 he was created a Companion of the Bath, and in 1927 a Knight Commander of the same Order. The Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, while Oxford and Cambridge each similarly honoured him with the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters. He was a Fellow of this Academy from 1913, an Honorary Fellow of Balliol, and also of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The Royal Scottish Academy elected him an Honorary Member, and he was a Trustee of the National Library of Scotland. He had been President of the Classical Associations of England and Wales, and of Scotland, and, on the occasion of the visit of the British Association to Edinburgh in 1928, he had presided over the Anthropological Section.

In appearance Macdonald was above middle height and powerfully built, with a short trimmed beard, a heavy moustache, and shaggy eyebrows. His brown eyes were steady, and his gaze penetrating. To those who did not know him well his expression may have appeared severe, but to his intimate friends he was full of kindness and sympathy. To any one asking his advice it was readily given; if a friend happened to be laid aside by sickness, Macdonald would find time to visit him and sit by his bedside. He loved children, and children had no fear of him. He had

a pleasant sense of humour, which at times enabled him to see the ludicrous side of an episode which to another man might have caused annoyance. He was very deaf in his right ear, which made him somewhat averse from going out in society; but he enjoyed dispensing hospitality in his own home, and there were few distinguished archaeologists visiting Edinburgh who did not experience his kindness.

He indulged in no sports, unless working out the most difficult of cross-word puzzles can be so termed. Walking was his favourite recreation, and numerous summer holidays were spent with his family at one or other of the less frequented resorts in the Swiss Alps, in the Highlands of Scotland, or in Shetland. Shetland possessed a special charm for him with its bracing air, its wild coast-scenery and the remoteness which it then enjoyed from the stress and bustle of modern life.

Though hardly to be classed as a mountaineer, he had done a little climbing of a modest character, and such adventures he continued to enjoy until a comparatively late period of his life.

As a writer of clear, concise English he held a high place, and his prose was never marred by ambiguity nor blurred by the use of uncouth or unfamiliar terms. His surprising memory enabled him to dispense with note-books, even when engaged in excavating, and yet, when the account of the exploration was written, no detail was omitted. He was equally gifted in his memory for literary references, which enabled him to turn at once to any particular passage required.

While he did not suffer fools gladly, he was indulgent and helpful to honest effort. But to the man he suspected of shirking, or of not conscientiously carrying out his duty, he showed no mercy. No friend ever appealed to him in vain for help, and many were indebted to Macdonald for reading proofs, a task at which he was particularly proficient and helpful. He disliked publicity and did not readily rush into controversy, but on the few occasions on which

he felt compelled to enter the arena, he proved himself a dangerous opponent.

He was a distinguished administrator, a wise counsellor, and a steadfast friend. His broad humanity, his learning, and his sound judgement were such as to render his death a very genuine loss to his country through the many bodies on which he served.

The author has acknowledged his indebtedness for assistance to Sir Frederic Kenyon and Sir George Hill. He desires also to express his thanks to Mr. Reginald T. Hawkins of the Scottish Education Department for much assistance in regard to Macdonald's official career, also to Sir William McKechnie in the same connexion. To numerous other friends who had been associated with Macdonald in various bodies he is also indebted.

A. O. CURLE