

ARTHUR ANTHONY MACDONELL

1854-1930

PROFESSOR ARTHUR ANTHONY MACDONELL became a member of the British Academy in 1906: his death took place on 28 December 1930, about four years after his retirement from the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit in Oxford, which he had held from 1899.

In an interesting autobiographical sketch, which formed the opening of a course of lectures delivered before the University of Calcutta, the late Professor has related that, though both his father and his mother were natives of the north of Scotland, at the western geographical limit of the Indo-European nations, he himself was born in the north-east of India, their oriental frontier. His father, Alexander Anthony Macdonell (b. 1822), was in fact a Macdonell of the Lochgarry branch, who, going out to India in 1841, as an Ensign in the 40th Bengal Native Infantry, received there his promotion through the military grades to the rank of Colonel (1867) and died at Mussoorie in 1870. His mother, Margaret Jane Lachlan, of Rum, born in 1831, brought by her marriage in 1853 further attachments to India; she had seven brothers and sisters who passed a part of their lives, most of them as her contemporaries, there. The first of the two sons, the future Professor, was born on 14 May 1854, at Muzaffarpur in Tirhut (North Bihar). Thus his earliest impressions were of scenes in northern India, the Ganges river and the Gandak, Pusa, Sonpur, Buxar, Patna, and Mussoorie, ending with a journey by house-boat to Calcutta. It is stated that in the year 1857 he had been saved by the fidelity of an Indian servant from sharing the fate of many other young children at the hands of the mutineers; he was concealed and conveyed to a boat. In Calcutta he escaped drowning in a tank, into which he had fallen while playing with a boy companion. But the scene which remained most vividly in his memory was one on board the sailing ship *Agamemnon* in the Hooghly, when,

in 1861, his father took leave of the family upon its departure, under the common necessity of sojourn in India, for Europe. For the purpose of education the future professor was sent, it is not known why, to Germany. Of his first school years, which were passed in Dresden (Neustadt), the only recorded incident is one which unfortunately left a permanent mark upon his physique. While engaged in skating, a pastime of which he was extremely fond, he was partially immersed in a pool. He had been unaccompanied, and in a Spartan spirit he concealed the occurrence and during several hours remained dressed in the chilling garments. Two days later he was discovered to be so severely frost-bitten that only complete amputation, it was held, of the legs could save his life. A telegram from his father forbade the operation; and in the sequel, after months of acute suffering, the boy's strong constitution prevailed; but throughout his life he manifested in his lower limbs a weakness which contrasted markedly with a powerful upper frame. A passion for reading, originated in the same period of bodily inactivity, is said to have been the beginning of his intellectual interests. It was in the Göttingen Gymnasium that his later school years (1870-5) were spent; and he afterwards claimed to have been the first Briton to pass the leaving examination (*Abiturienten-examen*) of a German High School, a fairly rigorous test which he surmounted in 1875. This was followed by his matriculation at the famous university in the same city. There under Professor Theodor Benfey, the eminent philologist and folk-lorist and one of the pioneers of Vedic research, he commenced the study of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology. Thus he brought to Oxford in 1876, when, at the age of 22, he entered as an Exhibitioner at Corpus Christi College, not only the strict training of a German High School and a close familiarity with the German language, but also an acquaintance with the seminary methods of a distinguished scholar and the intellectual tone of a German University. In Oxford, where he read in the Greats School (taking a Second

Class in Moderations (1878) and a Third in the Final Honour School of Literae Humaniores (1880), he did not lose sight of other interests. He won the Taylorian Scholarship in German (1876), the Davis Chinese Scholarship (1877), and the Boden Sanskrit Scholarship (1878): his Sanskrit studies he continued under Professor Monier Williams, and he himself gave lessons in Sanskrit to the first Japanese student of that language, Bunyiu Nanjio, who afterwards became a famous Buddhist scholar and divine. His bodily defect was not such as to prevent his joining the boats and becoming (in a time of seats still fixed) a powerful oarsman. In his last undergraduate year he was a member of a Corpus crew which won its oars: at the same time he was undergoing examination in the Schools and was also acting as deputy for the Taylorian Lecturer in German; consequently on each evening of the races he was under the necessity of hurrying away from the Examination to take his place in the boat, and then, after the race, of hastening in a cab to his rooms in order to dress and repair to the Taylorian for a lecture at 6 p.m. In the fraternal community of Corpus Christi his various accomplishments, together with his unusual training and outlook, his love of dangerous adventure, and his powerful physique, made him somewhat of a popular hero: on festive occasions it was a favourite College toast, 'dangerous for the very young', to drink his health in his numerous capacities. The designation 'Indo-Germanic Scot', which with reference to his ancestry, birth, education, and studies was conferred upon him by a college friend, must have come to connote among his intimates a combination of high spirits, independent interests, sound work, and general efficiency.

After taking his Degree Macdonell continued his Vedic studies under Max Müller and began the preparation of an edition of the *Sarvānukramaṇī*, an ancient Index to the *R̥g-Veda*. It was in this connexion that he revisited Germany, in 1884, for the purpose of working with the great Vedic scholar and lexicographer, Rudolf von Roth, of

Tübingen: and he proceeded thence to Leipzig, where he took the Degree of Ph.D. with a Thesis relating to the same text and with Comparative Philology and German as accessory subjects. The remainder of his life was spent as a teacher in Oxford, where from 1880 he had held the post of Taylorian Lecturer in German and from 1884 that of Lecturer in Sanskrit to Indian Civil Service Probationers in Balliol College. In 1888, upon the retirement of Professor Monier Williams, he became Deputy Professor of Sanskrit in the University and also Deputy Keeper of the Indian Institute. The death of Monier Williams in 1899 led to his appointment as successor to that scholar in the Professorship, in a Professorial Fellowship of Balliol College, and in the office of Keeper of the Institute. At the same time he surrendered his post of Taylorian Lecturer in German. His connexion with his old College was subsequently, in 1921, restored by his election as an Honorary Fellow of Corpus.

The 'life' of a University Professor, on its exterior side, is a record of his studies, his writings, his pupils, and his public action: in the case of Macdonell there were also the fortunes of the Institute whereof he was in responsible charge. Upon the death of Max Müller in 1900 he exerted himself to raise a commemorative fund, perpetuating in the University the name of a writer of many-sided inspiration, whose function as an Oxford representative of Vedic studies he may be said to have inherited. Macdonell was, in fact, from the first, and remained until the end, primarily a Vedist: that is to say, he was mainly concerned with that part of Sanskrit literature which belongs to the earliest period, which is most directly connected with its pre-Indian origins, which depends most upon philological methods, and which is in closest contact with the early history of religions. It was a period which, now that antiquity has ceased to be a matter of date, may be described as one in consideration of which we do not attribute to the authors and actors the full self-consciousness of the modern citizen. During the middle decades of the nineteenth century the

leading Sanskrit scholars had been mainly occupied with the Vedic language and literature, and there had been sweeping theories and great variance of interpretation. Macdonell came to the subject at a time when the completion of the great lexicon of Böhtlingk and Roth had made it evident that the interpretation of the Veda depended mainly upon methods of comparison within the Veda itself, combined with due, but cautious, regard to the traditional interpreters, without whose aid the Veda would never have been understood at all. A pupil of Roth and himself no theorist, nor a specialist in Avestan or Iranian or Indo-European philology, and also strictly trained in historico-critical methods, Macdonell addressed himself to the study of the texts as Indian compositions, and to the record of their actual contents. The two texts which he actually edited may seem to be both of an uninviting character. The former of them, the *Sarvānukramaṇī* already mentioned, was edited (first as a Degree thesis in Leipzig, 1884, and then, 1886, as a volume of the *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Aryan Series, Vol. I, Part IV) with a commentary by a certain Śaḍguruśiṣya, and two supplementary operettes, namely, an index of Sections (*Anuvāka*) in the *Ṛg-Veda* by Śaunaka and a versified summary of the numbers of verses (*chandaḥ-saṃkhyā*) in each metre. The main text is an index of first words, number of verses, authors, divinities, and metres of the hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda* in order. Occasionally, for exegetic purposes, it refers to stories, and in the commentary many more stories are adduced. The work is therefore one of the 'control' texts relating to the *Ṛg-Veda*; and its early date, about the middle of the fourth century B.C., makes it valuable for the elucidation of references in the hymns and for the verification of the tradition. The edition was based upon a collation of nine manuscripts for the main text and six, two, and five respectively for the supplements and commentary: it is equipped with full critical apparatus, indexes, and some explanatory notes. The second work of this kind appeared in 1904 with the title *The Bṛhad-devatā attributed to*

Śaunaka, a summary of the deities and myths of the *Rig-Veda* (2 vols.—text and annotated translation—Harvard Oriental Series, v and vi). Dating from about 400 B.C., the *Bṛhad-devatā* is important not only for control, but also as containing the earliest references to many stories which occur in the *Mahā-Bhārata*. The language is fairly ancient; and the relation of the text to the *Nirukta* of Yāska (largely concerned with Vedic legends) and to several other old works renders it suitable for critical fixation. It had attracted the attention of some well-known scholars (A. Kuhn, Max Müller, G. Thibaut, C. R. Lanman), and it was recommended to Macdonell by the last-named, Editor-in-chief of the Harvard Oriental Series. Editor and Editor-in-chief gave their skilled forethought and unremitting attention to the workmanship of the two volumes, which display an admirable clarity and convenience for use. In preparing the edition Macdonell went through the text with his chief pupils, as an exercise in method. Through these fortunate conjunctions he was able to declare in his preface that none of his previous publications had given him so much pleasure in its preparation. The lecture-room triumphs of textual matters happily settled, and of side-lights upon many an allusion in Indian literature, were, in fact, of a nature to kindle Macdonell's severe critical earnestness to a glow and to call into play his shrewd and delightful humour.

No other work of full-dress editing came from Macdonell's pen. But his other two chief writings relating to the Veda were really of a far more chalkenteric nature. They were both contributed, naturally with a wide interval of time, to the *Encyclopedia of Indo-Aryan Research* (*Grundriss der indo-arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde*), designed by Professor Georg Bühler to present a systematic account of the state of knowledge in relation to each department, with complete bibliographical apparatus. The subject of the *Vedic Mythology* (Strassburg, 1897) was one linked to Macdonell's previous studies; and the exact and exhaustive exposé of the material was in accord with his manner of

working. Not that he abstains from consideration of generalities at the outset or from well-balanced reviews at the conclusions of the several topics. Thus he devotes some pages at the beginning of the book to a survey of the nature and growth of mythology and of the characteristics and sources of the Vedic, and adds some judicious observations concerning the method imposed by the conditions ruling in the latter sphere. In a general contemplation of the Vedic divinities he examines with impartiality and acumen Max Müller's conception of 'Kathenotheism' and discriminates the degrees of anthropomorphism in the pantheon, the physical and moral attributes of the gods, and their relationships and classifications. The descriptions of the individual divinities furnish practically complete citations of the Vedic passages referring to these, and end with summaries of the indications bearing upon their essential natures and origins. There are also sections dealing with demonic powers, worship of animals, plants, and other objects, and with death, burial, and a future life. The work is therefore rather a total account of the Vedic religion, exclusive of the ritual, than a mythology simply. There were prior treatises, more voluminous and less compact, on the Vedic mythology (and, of course, innumerable discussions of particular topics) by famous scholars, who in some cases had worked with comprehensive theories. Macdonell in general inclines to repudiate Hillebrandt and to concur with Oldenberg. His positive exposition affords a basis for criticism of his predecessors and an invaluable aid for reference and verification. The second treatise contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Indo-Aryan Research*, the *Vedic Grammar* (Strassburg, 1910) is a complete account of the features (syntax excepted) of Vedic Sanskrit, as exemplified in the oldest texts, namely, the four Vedas, with their various recensions. The subject of Sanskrit grammar had in the Sanskrit itself, from about 600 B.C., a literature of vast extent, including theoretical discussions, precise definitions, and a technical apparatus of great complexity and difficulty:

some of the particulars which it records are perhaps still unabsorbed. The first comprehensive attempt at a mastery of it was made in Colebrooke's incomplete work. Bopp followed with a 'critical' grammar, in a larger and an abbreviated form. The substantial treatises of Macdonell's two eminent predecessors in the Oxford Chair, Wilson and Monier Williams, were entitled respectively *An Introduction to the Grammar of the Sanskrit Language* and *A Practical Grammar of the Sanskrit Language*, while that of Max Müller was *A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners*. In 1852 appeared Benfey's *Vollständige Grammatik*, which in its time may have been the most thorough. All these depended primarily upon the statements of the Indian authorities. More of direct, and in part statistical, study of the older literature was represented by the work of Whitney, predominant in Macdonell's time; and the same line of approach had been followed in the syntactical researches of Delbrück and in monographs on Vedic usage, such as Lanman's *Noun-inflection in the Veda* and Lindner's *Altindische Nominalbildung* and in Wackernagel's *Altindische Grammatik*, whereof two parts had appeared. Naturally there were many other special studies. For two of the Vedas the whole morphological material was available in dictionary form, namely, for the *R̥g-Veda* in Grassmann's wonderful *Wörterbuch* and for the *Atharva-Veda* in Whitney's *Index*. Macdonell was, however, justified in stating that his extensive work (456 close-packed pages of large octavo size) was the first separate exposition of Vedic grammar as a whole (exclusive of the syntax). Compared with Monro's *Homeric Grammar*, it would be distinguished first by its omission of the syntax, and then by its own extent and the extent of the texts to which it relates, by its complete citations under each head of formation, and in general by a more strictly factual character. The utility of such a work of reference lies in the exhaustiveness and accuracy of the citations and in the exactness of the generalizing statements and rules. For meeting both requirements Macdonell was well prepared, and he enjoyed

also the co-operation of Wackernagel as general editor. It is the sort of book which a mature scholar would not only use for casual reference, but would with advantage from time to time look through, in order to correct inequalities or obscurities in his working knowledge.

For a third extensive work of Vedic philology, the *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (Indian Texts Series, 2 vols., London, 1912), the most generally useful and best known of all, Macdonell was in the fortunate position of having for collaborator the ablest of his pupils, Professor Arthur Berriedale Keith. The project had originally been brought to his notice by Professor Rhys Davids in 1902, when laying out the lines of the 'Indian Texts Series', financed and controlled (through the Royal Asiatic Society) by the Secretary of State for India and the Government of India. It was the assurance of Professor Keith's co-operation that prevented the relinquishment of the design and assured its prosecution and rapid completion. 'Dr. Keith has collected the material, while I have acted chiefly as an editor, planning the scope of the work, arranging the distribution of text and notes, selecting the type to be used, cutting out, adding to or modifying the matter, weighing the evidence for different interpretations and conclusions, and deciding as to which view, in case of possible alternatives, should be preferred. Having written up in its final form every article contained in the book, I accept the responsibility for every statement and opinion expressed in it. I do not think that Dr. Keith and I have disagreed upon any material point. Where we have differed on minor questions, he has deferred to my judgement, though his view may have been right just as often as mine.' The happy collaboration of two able sons of Scotland, continuing an affectionate relation of teacher and pupil, must have greatly expedited the completion of a task for which either of them would have been singly competent; and it fortifies the confidence, which the use of the valuable volumes confirms, that nothing material has been overlooked or insufficiently reviewed.

Macdonell's publications as a Vedist were not confined to these strictly scholarly editions and compilations. The production of educational works was, in his view, an obligation of his professorial chair. His *Vedic Grammar for Students* (Oxford, 1916), a substantial epitome of the larger work, with a supplementary addition, comprising the syntax and metres, and his *Vedic Reader for Students* (Oxford, 1917), may be regarded in that light. But of the second, at least, it should be said that, as the author's maturest work, it may have given him in the shaping of it a part of the satisfaction which its completeness affords to its readers. It has been described as a charming book. Thirty well-chosen Vedic hymns are edited with full introductions concerning the deities invoked, with exact transliterations and translations, and with concise notes on all points of metre, accentuation, accident, syntax, and interpretation; also with a full glossary. The *Reader* is almost entirely free from error or misprint; and its author's ripe knowledge of the subject lends it a quality which makes it attractive to students.

A transition to Macdonell's non-Vedic writings (disregarding his second edition, 1886, of Max Müller's *Sanskrit Grammar*) may be made with his *History of Sanskrit Literature* (Short Histories of the World, ix, 1900). This is, in fact, in the greater part devoted to the Veda, and it includes a number of excellent verse translations (unrhymed) of selected hymns. The later literature (Epic, Gnostic, Dramatic, Romantic) is treated far more summarily, the technical branches merely by bibliographies. But here, too, there are some metrical renderings, and the volume is agreeable as well as informative. The *Sanskrit Grammar for Students* (first edition 1901, second edition 1911, third edition 1927) is likewise convenient and widely used. The *Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, undertaken upon a suggestion of Max Müller, and published in 1892 (photographic reproduction 1924), is a quarto volume of 382 pages, each in three columns. It is based upon the great lexicon of Böhtlingk and Roth, in its abbreviated issue by Böhtlingk, with omission of most

of the Vedic and technical literature: its originality consists chiefly in the arrangement and in practical devices aiming at curtailment and clarity. Being quite adequate for the texts most commonly studied and also methodical and convenient for use, it might be in greater demand if the public were larger and were not cheaper competitors available on the Continent and in India.

Reference may here be made to some scattered contributions to collectaneous publications. Volumes compiled in honour of Rudolf von Roth (1893), Hendrik Kern (1903), and R. G. Bhandarkar (1917) included each a paper by Macdonell, in the last-named instance of particular interest as giving his view of the principles to be followed in translating the *R̥g-Veda*. An etymological article ('Über Vānara und Verwandtes') appeared in Kuhn's *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* for 1897 (vol. xxxiv). A number of articles connected with Indian religions, &c., will be found in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* and in the eleventh and twelfth editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Noticeable as likely to be overlooked, and also as lying somewhat off the author's usual beat, are the two papers on 'The Ancient Indian Conception of the Soul and the Future Life' and 'Immortality in Indian Thought', contributed respectively to the *Journal of Theological Studies* (vol. i, pp. 492-506) and to *Immortality*, edited by Sir James Marchant (1924). The latest of Macdonell's publications (except the selected translations to be mentioned as posthumous) was a complete and compact volume entitled *India's Past, a Study of the Literatures, Languages, Religions, and Antiquities* (Oxford, 1927): it is an up-to-date compendium of information concerning outstanding matters under those heads.

A not inconsiderable demand upon the Boden Professor's energies was made by his function as Keeper of the Indian Institute. Of this foundation, which owed its design and realization mainly to his predecessor, Monier Williams, his own University life had witnessed the inception, the first materialization (laying of the foundation-stone, 1883,

opening, 1884), and the completion (1895-6). The well-known building bordering on Broad Street and Holywell Street was designed to contain a library and a museum, to provide rooms for class-lectures on Oriental subjects and for public lectures and entertainments, and to house a Librarian as well as a janitor. As Deputy Professor of Sanskrit, Macdonell had frequented it for lecturing from 1888 onwards, and in 1899 he became, as Keeper, fully responsible, under the body of Curators, for its general administration. This involved the allotment of times and spaces, including arrangements for lectures, &c., the procuring of subventions for general or special purposes, the management of the internal finance and other business (reports, minutes, correspondence, &c.), provision for growth and disposition of the library and museum, and superintendence of the work of the librarian and all other employees. The vicissitudes of such activity are not usually of biographical interest, except when they become critical, and this did not, except in the case of the transfer to be mentioned later, happen in the time of Macdonell, whose main special interest was in the improvement of the library and of its catalogue. The measure of success which was achieved in this department was regarded by him with well-founded satisfaction. The collection of books and periodicals relating to India had been brought up to a fair standard of completeness (except in respect of Indian vernacular publications), and a systematic general catalogue had been pushed on. Of the library's own Sanskrit and Prakrit MSS. and of a collection deposited by Dr. (now Sir Aurel) Stein descriptive catalogues had been gratuitously compiled by Dr. A. Berriedale Keith (1901) and Mr. G. L. M. Clauson (1912); and Macdonell had assured their publication. In 1926, when the library was by University statute placed under the administration of the Bodleian, he was in favour of the transference and drew up a memorandum upon the subject. The Museum, which in its confined and limited space could never be more than fractionally representative

of India and which by reason of lack of resources grew mainly through presentation, received attention, when funds were available, in the way of due arrangement and labelling; a brief, but adequate, catalogue, a Guide to the Institute, was compiled under Macdonell's supervision, though on account of post-bellum conditions and a final arrest of development it was not committed to print. Personally Macdonell from time to time delivered public lectures in the Institute; and his donations to it included some special maps and the entire collection of lantern slides made from the series of (chiefly archaeological) photographs which he took during his first visit to India.

Naturally the Boden Professor rendered services on University Boards and similar bodies, in the Examination Schools, and in semi-official consultations. Mention may be confined to his function as an Administrator of the Max Müller Memorial Fund. In this capacity he was able to procure subvention for a number of objects, such as Mr. Norman's researches in Pali, Professor Takakusu's work on a Sanskrit-Chinese Dictionary, acquisition of manuscripts, photographing of Nepal MSS., Dr. Neisser's studies in Vedic lexicography, and for certain publications, such as Mr. Pargiter's work on *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* and Mr. Gambier-Parry's catalogue (1922) of the Sanskrit MSS. purchased for the Fund. In the general public affairs of the University Macdonell's overt intervention does not seem to have been frequent; but this should not imply detachment of interest on the part of a man whose disposition led him to care for the outcome without coveting the advocacy.

An agreeable feature of his professorial life was his relations with his pupils, most of them destined for the Indian Civil Service. The first (1884) was (Sir) Edward Maclagan, subsequently Governor of the Panjab and now (1932) for a second period President of the Royal Asiatic Society: many others followed in after years. Then there were Europeans, Indians, and Japanese, who, adopting a learned

career, came to occupy educational positions in India or in other countries. There is no need to make further mention of Arthur Berriedale Keith, Regius Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology in the University of Edinburgh, whose work is otherwise so well known; and reference has already been made to the Japanese Buddhist teacher, Bunyiu Nanjio. But piety suggests a citation of the names of Harry Campbell Norman, a scholar of Trinity College, Oxford, who before and during his short tenure (1905-13) of a Professorship of English Literature in Benares was engaged upon valuable editions of Pali texts and of whom Macdonell published an obituary notice; and of Todar Mall, M.A., of the Lahore University. The latter, having matriculated at Oxford in 1911, and having in the following year taken first-class honours, proceeded to Bonn for further special study; being caught there by the war, he met with a premature death (perhaps hastened by privations) in 1918. An edition of a well-known Sanskrit play, the *Mahāvīra-carita* of Bhavabhūti, prepared by Todar Mall under Macdonell's supervision, during his stay in Oxford, was returned to Lahore; having been carried through the press, at a great expenditure of labour, by his Oxford teacher, it was published in 1928 with a preface by that teacher, expressing the hope that it might prove a model for future critical editions of texts in India. Nor was this the only instance of Macdonell's labour in perfecting, according to his standard of methodical exactness, compositions of pupils intended for, or passing through, the press. This is, however, only the strictly business side, so to speak, of his work as a teacher; for the recollections of his pupils, as of his colleagues, are of pleasant hours with abundant diversion of humour and anecdote.

Turning to extra-University achievements, we must spare a word for the continuation of Macdonell's aquatic experiences by way of canoeing expeditions on German rivers. The distinguished partner in these adventures has recorded (Dr. L. R. Farnell in *The Times* of 29 January 1931) that

'he had the primitive man's religion of the wild and was most happy when canoeing down a long and dangerous rapid—such as we found in perfection on the Danube—or trout-fishing in a lonely tarn'. Characteristically these activities were also made to bear definite literary fruit in the form of instructive publications, *Camping Voyages on German Rivers* (1890) and *Camping Out* (All England Series, 1892; Handbook of Athletic Sports, vii, 1893).¹

In 1882 Macdonell became a member of the Royal Asiatic Society; but he did not contribute frequently or extensively to its publications. He served as a member of its Council during the periods 1909–13, 1916–20, 1924–8, and from 1921 to 1924 he was one of its Vice-Presidents. The Bombay Branch of the Society designated him in 1913 as recipient of the Campbell Memorial Medal at its third triennial award. The Medal, which was designed as a recognition of distinguished services in Oriental Research, was formally presented by Lord Sandhurst at a meeting in the rooms of the Royal Asiatic Society on 14 March 1916. In acknowledging the presentation and the speech in which Lord Sandhurst had commemorated the recipient's various services and achievements Macdonell gave an account of some of the activities which we have already related, and further made mention of a letter which in conjunction with other scholars he had recently addressed to the Government of Madras with a view to ensuring a high scholarly character in a Dictionary of the Tamil language which was being compiled under that Government's authority. He went on to advocate the establishment of an institute of research in India on the lines of the school of Classical Archaeology in Athens or the French school in Indo-China: to such an institute young men could be sent out with fellowships or grants from the old universities.

The International Congresses whereof Macdonell was

¹ M.'s work as Tylor Lecturer in German was signalized by annotated editions of Paul Heyse's *Hans Lange*, Auerbach's *Auf Wache*, and Roquette's *Der gefrorene Kuss* (1885).

a member included nearly all those which took place in his time, from that of Berlin (1881) to that of Athens (1912). At Hamburg (1902) and at Athens he made communications relating to the subjects which were occupying him at those dates. At Copenhagen (1908) he obtained support for a projected congress of Indo-Orientalists to be held in Calcutta, and also recommended acceptance of an invitation, ultimately rejected, to make India the scene of the next general Orientalist assemblage. At Athens, in 1912, in offering on behalf of the University of Oxford to receive there the next congress he was rewarded by success: in due course arrangements were initiated for a gathering in 1915 under his chairmanship. Eventually the outbreak of the war postponed the meeting until the year 1928, when Macdonell was no longer able to take an active part in it.

Other Asiatic societies with which Macdonell was connected were the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, which he joined in 1884, the American Oriental Society, which elected him as an Honorary Member in 1918, and the Asiatic Society of Bengal, of which he was elected an Honorary Fellow in 1922. Here we may take notice also of his Fellowship (1924) of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences, his Honorary Membership (1919) of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Honorary Degrees conferred upon him by the Universities of Edinburgh (1920, Hon. LL.D.) and Calcutta (1923, Hon. D.C.L.).

It was, as has been mentioned, in 1906 that Macdonell was elected a member of the British Academy. He was appointed as its representative upon a committee of the International Association of Academies entrusted with the charge of arranging for a critical edition of the great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahā-Bhārata*. In the name of the Committee an appeal was addressed in 1911 by three of its members, of whom Macdonell was one, to the princes and nobles of India, inviting them to contribute to the expenses of preparing the edition. A separate appeal, issued by Macdonell later, in conjunction with a colleague, elicited contributions

amounting to about £1,500: eventually the fund was vested in a body of trustees, Macdonell being the representative of Oxford, which position he ultimately relinquished along with his professorship.

We now come to the most interesting, and perhaps the most profitable, of his evagations from University life—since a passing allusion may suffice for his visit to America in 1904, opportune though it may have been for conference with his old collaborator, Professor Lanman, and marked by his election as representative of the Sanskrit language and literature at a Congress of Arts and Sciences in St. Louis. In the year 1907, having obtained leave from the duties of his professorship, he made, in company with a young Balliol friend, Mr. Nevill Forbes, afterwards University Professor of Russian, a voyage to India, where he spent some ten months, chiefly occupied by visits to places of archaeological interest, but not overlooking the Botanical Gardens of Colombo and Calcutta, so instructive in connexion with Sanskrit literature. He journeyed about 10,500 miles in British India and the Indian States, and brought back several hundreds of photographs which he had taken. Upon his return he lectured in a number of places on Indian architecture and sculpture. Of his discourse before the British Academy a summary was published in its *Proceedings* for 1909. In a lecture delivered before the Royal Society of Arts, Indian Section, he propounded some rather sweeping theories concerning the development of architectural styles in northern and southern India and in countries influenced by India; and he offered an explanation of the many-armed figures of Indian divinities, motivated, he thought, by a necessity of accommodating a plurality of emblems. These views, which are of a somewhat simplist character, were disputed by Sir George Watt and others and have not as yet been much regarded by archaeologists: this may, however, have been due to a non-technical line of approach. Another publication resulting from the journey was an account of 'A Visit to a Jungle Rajah' (published in *The Pelican Record*,

January 1908). Invited by the Raja of Āṭhgarh, a small feudatory state in Orissa, the Boden Professor made an excursion on a state elephant through real jungle and was ceremoniously received in the palace, where his host could not only afford him an insight into the life of an old feudal fief, but, being himself a Sanskrit scholar, could engage him in literary discourse, relating in particular to a Sanskrit epic, his own composition, with a proper full commentary by the Rānī. A tiger-shoot on the second morning failed through default of the tiger; but the skin of a tigress which had been previously secured followed the guest to Calcutta and still adorns the Keeper's room in the Indian Institute.

The most important outcome, however, of the first visit to India was the acquisition of a library of about 7,000 Sanskrit manuscripts. Having inspected the library in Benares and having been made aware of its availability for purchase, Macdonell was able upon his return to Oxford to interest the Vice-Chancellor and through him the then Viceroy and Governor-General, Lord Curzon, in the idea of procuring it for the Bodleian. Through an appeal by His Lordship to the generosity of the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mahārāja Chandra Shumshere Jung, a great ruler and patron of learning in his own state, the collection was secured for the Bodleian without cost to the University. The success of the negotiation gave immense pleasure to Macdonell, who could claim thereby to have established the Oxford library in the position of owning the largest collection of Sanskrit manuscripts outside India. At a later date (1913) he was able, through a liberal concession on the part of the Nepal Mahārāja and with a subvention from the Max Müller Memorial Fund, to arrange for photographic facsimiles of a number of ancient and valuable manuscripts belonging to the Mahārāja's own library in Kāṭhmāṇḍū. Of the large collection a manuscript catalogue has been compiled in the Bodleian, while the facsimiles have been made known through the printed catalogue by Mr. Gambier-Parry, to which we have already alluded.

The second visit to India (1922-3) was undertaken in view of an engagement to deliver a course of lectures, the Stephanos Nirmalendu lectures, on Comparative Religion in the University of Calcutta. The lectures, which were carefully prepared, were issued as a Calcutta University publication in 1925. This volume, which in 190 pages treats of Primitive Religion, Chinese Religion, the religion of Persia, the religions of India, Buddhism and Buddhist morality, Greek Religion and Morality, Judaism, Muhammadanism, and Christianity, is naturally of limited scientific value. What renders it interesting, and sometimes amusing, is a certain naïvety and authority (the lectures having obviously been designed mainly for students) of tone in combination with occasional reflections of a downright or pointed character. The rather precise limitation of the aspects under which the several religions are reviewed was, no doubt, partly conditioned by a direction on the part of the founder of the lectureship to the effect that the lecturer should aim at showing 'that the highest ideal for man is to be found in unselfish love and service of his fellows which is the essence of the teachings of Christ . . . it ought to be shown rather that living the religion of love constitutes the highest development of man's personality'. 'With this view', said Macdonell, 'I may say I am in thorough sympathy. . . Though brought up in the atmosphere of Christianity, the general spirit of which I have imbibed, I do not hold a brief for any particular dogma. Towards the different religions that I propose to pass in review my attitude will be that of a judge, not of an advocate; or that of the scholar, whose guiding star is the search for truth.' It is, however, evident that this 'common-sense' point of view, though it gives the book a value of its own, does not carry with it either the philosophical or the psychological, or the anthropological, or even, except in part, the first-hand historical preparation required for a really illuminating study of so vast and profound a subject.

It was in the exordium of these lectures that Macdonell

placed on record the autobiographical statement to which reference has been made. At the same time he made mention of a design which was to crown a course of studies continued during more than thirty years. This was a critical prose translation of the *Rg-Veda*, whereof the small volume of metrical translations published in 1925 had been a forerunner. Unhappily the project, which would have furnished the English language with a translation more or less equivalent in date and quality to the German rendering of Geldner, was not destined to mature. The small specimen which has appeared (1932) in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* was published posthumously.

At this point we may take up again the biographical thread which was relinquished in a survey of a literary activity. Macdonell was married in 1890 to Mary Louise, youngest daughter of William Lowson, J.P., D.L., of Balthayock in Perthshire, a lady of great personal attractions. They set up house in 7 Fyfield Road, where their children were born, two daughters, who survive them (Mrs. H. S. Clemons, still resident in Oxford, and Mrs. James Norton), and a son, Alasdair Somerled. Nothing more need here be said concerning their Oxford life, with its Academic, College, social, and intellectual interests, its hospitalities to visitors from within and from without, in particular to pupils and other junior members of the University. Macdonell's days of regular labour, often commencing with pre-breakfast occupation or exercise in his garden, were not, it seems, frequently interrupted by excursions abroad, except for the purpose of taking part in international meetings or with similar objects. But in 1912 he made a visit to Canada for the purpose of introducing his son (educated at Oxford (The Dragon School) and Repton, and subsequently at Balliol College, Oxford) to the remnant of his branch of the Macdonells, still forming a Gaelic-speaking community in Montreal. The chief, for such was Macdonell's relation to the settlers, and his young heir met with an enthusiastic reception. But the occasion was also—unknown to all the

participants—valedictory. Upon the outbreak of the war in 1914 the young scion of the clan, an athlete of powerful physique, was one of the early volunteers for service, and he was killed in action near Hulluch in 1915. His father's war service—he was, no doubt, the 'aged Professor of Sanskrit' whose offer of help was mentioned, with no excessive discretion, in a newspaper—took the form of literary investigation in the Intelligence Department of the Admiralty: among the series of volumes compiled for that authority were three memoirs (1915, 1918, 1920) by him, relating to Eurasian routes and Turanian peoples of central and northern Asia.

It is clear that the strain of the war period, and above all the loss of his only son, made a grave inroad upon Macdonell's vital powers. Occasional acerbity was traceable in his published reference to the enemy peoples, and a feeling of weakness was perhaps betrayed in a reply to a friend who had observed that subtle war deterioration could be detected in the morale of persons outwardly unchanged: his comment was, 'Yes, first of all in oneself'. The great literary activity of the following years culminated in the effort demanded by the preparation of his Calcutta lectures, and there was a premonition of failing health: the fatigue and distractions of the journey were followed by a stroke which disabled him for a time and induced him at the end of the following year (1926) to resign his Professorship and the annexed University functions. On that occasion the University accorded to him the title of Professor Emeritus. It was his intention to devote his remaining powers to the completion of his prose translation of the *R̥g-Veda*. But the danger of excessive blood-pressure restricted his hours of work. His mornings were usually passed with his books in his garden house, where he always welcomed his friends and engaged, as of old, in cheerful and humorous talk. On the occasion of the International Congress of Orientalists in 1928 he was gratified by the visits of no less than forty of its members. His election to an Honorary Fellowship of

Balliol College came in the same year. In the summer of 1930 his afternoon drives with his wife or daughter were suspended in consequence of a second stroke, less severe indeed than the first. Autumn found him weaker: he became confined to his bed, seeing but few visitors. The end came on 28 December of that year.

Mrs. Macdonell survived her husband about eighteen months: her death took place on 12 June 1932, and she was interred with him in the Holywell cemetery.

Macdonell was a man of great goodness, sincere, friendly, helpful, free from ill-will and 'contra-suggestion', and 'of a radiant humour that rippled on to the end in unflinching sunlight'. Even when his indignation was aroused by slipshod work or unreliability in action, he was unflinching rather than severe. He was entirely unassuming and anxious to co-operate; if at any time he had been conscious of opposing currents, certainly there would have been no sign. As a scholar, he was characterized by a strong critical bent. 'He was never captivated by the glitter of new and startling theories, but only by the light that plays over finely sifted truth.' His industry and love of a definite outcome led to the production of substantial and accurate treatises upon the subjects which he took in hand: he showed alert independence in the details of his work and in the projects which he advocated or personally carried into effect.

F. W. THOMAS.

(*Bibliography*: Obituary Notices in *The Times* of 29 December 1930, the *Oxford Mail* of the same date; communication by Dr. L. R. Farnell to *The Times* of 2 January 1931, and memoir by the same in the *Oxford Magazine* for 29 January 1931.)